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Vol. 12 Summer and Winter 1990 Nos. 1 and 2

WILLIAM E. SHEIDLEY	*Hamlet* as a Vision of Renewal
JEFFREY P. BECK	Pulled from the Melodious Lay: 'A World Elsewhere' and the Songs of *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*
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Notes, Production Reports, and Reviews by

SUDHAKAR MARATHE, MICHAEL D. STANNARD, JANIE CAVES McCAULEY, W. HUTCHINGS, RAJIVA VERMA

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Notes and Comments

With the publication of this volume, *Hamlet Studies* has at last overcome the problem of delay and is in step with Time. Since *Hamlet Studies* has reflected the Prince's delay for nearly ten years, it would be appropriate to devote this section to the issue of delay. Lamb adduces no less than six reasons for Hamlet's delay:

> Every hour of delay seemed to him a sin, and a violation of his father's commands. [1] Yet how to compass the death of the king, surrounded as he constantly was with his guards, was no easy matter. [2] Or if it had been, the presence of the queen, Hamlet's mother, who was generally with the king, was a restraint upon his purpose, which he could not break through. [3] Besides, the very circumstance that the usurper was his mother's husband filled him with some remorse, and still blunted the edge of his purpose. [4] The mere act of putting a fellow-creature to death was in itself odious and terrible to a disposition naturally so gentle as Hamlet's was. [5] His very melancholy, and the dejection of spirits he had so long been in, produced an irresoluteness and wavering of purpose, which kept him from proceeding to extremities. [6] Moreover, he could not help having some scruples upon his mind whether the spirit which he had seen was indeed his father, or whether it might not be the devil. . . . (1807)

This is a remarkable passage. It anticipates a great deal of later criticism, but more striking than this is the *order* of the reasons Lamb offers for Hamlet's delay. In the play Lamb's last two points are, in fact, the first. At the end of Act 2, immediately after the player's speech on Pyrrhus, Hamlet's soliloquy "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" concludes with the well known passage, "The spirit that I have seen/May be a devil. . . ." But the first point in Lamb's list is a physical obstacle that Hamlet cannot overcome; the second and third relate to his mother's feelings; and the last three points pertain to what is usually associated with the 'romantic' sensibility. Though a contemporary of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lamb's Hamlet is not an ineffectual dreamer but a practical man of action who finds himself thwarted by the presence of Claudius's "Switzers" (4.5.97). Hamlet nowhere mentions Lamb's point no. 1 as a problem, yet Lamb gives it prominence by extrapolation. It is possible that Lamb derives this point from Hamlet's lines, "Or to take arms against a sea of troubles/And by opposing end them." In a reversal of this situation later in the play, we recall, Claudius's Switzers were unable to quell the waves of rioters:

> Save yourself, my lord.
> The ocean, overpeering of his list,
> Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
> Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
> O'erbears your officers.
>
> (4.5.98-101)

Further evidence of Lamb minimizing Hamlet's doubts as to the Ghost's honesty being a cause for his delay is suggested in the words he uses for point no. 6: "he could not help having some scruples . . ." Why "some," when Hamlet himself makes these scruples the starting point for *The Murder of Gonzago*? In conformity with Lamb's image of a purposeful Hamlet, he sees Hamlet finishing off Claudius in one fell swoop:

> When Hamlet saw his end draw near, there being yet some venom left upon the sword, he suddenly turned upon his false uncle, and thrust the point of it to his heart, fulfilling the promise which he had made to his father's spirit, whose injunction was now accomplished, and his foul murder revenged upon the murderer.

This Hamlet leaves no scope for Claudius's appeal, "O yet defend me, friends, I am but hurt," nor is there any need for Hamlet to use the poisoned wine as insurance against his survival. Lamb makes no mention of this sequel. Lamb concludes thus:

> And, thus satisfied, the noble heart of Hamlet cracked; and Horatio and the bystanders with many tears commended the spirit of their sweet prince to the guardianship of angels; for Hamlet was a loving and a gentle prince, and greatly beloved for his many noble and prince-like qualities, and if he had lived would no doubt have proved a most royal and complete king to Denmark.

Charles and Mary Lamb's intention was "to make these Tales easy reading for very young children,"* and it is in this context that Lamb's simplified account should be regarded; nevertheless his narrative does shed considerable light upon his impression of the Prince.

* * *

William E. Shiedley's "*Hamlet* as a Vision of Renewal" is a demonstration, in terms of archetypal symbolism, of Rosencrantz's lines which, though he applies them to Claudius, are really true of the legitimate king, Hamlet Senior:

> The cess of majesty
> Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
> What's near it with it. Or it is a massy wheel
> Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortis'd and adjoin'd, which when it falls
> Each small annexment, petty consequence,
> Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
> Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.

Jeffrey P. Beck's "Pulled from the Melodious Lay: 'A World Elsewhere' and the Songs of *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*" is an examination of the links between the songs in *As You Like It*, written shortly before *Hamlet*, with their mellifluous insouciance, and the broken and disjunct songs of *Hamlet*. The investigation of the links between *Hamlet* and Shakespeare's other plays relating to the ambiguous identity of the Ghost is the subject of Peter J. Sorensen's article on "Hamlet's Ghost," while for David Thatcher "The Killing of Polonius" by Hamlet, despite much speculation by editors and critics, "must remain problematic simply because no clear view of it ever emerges at any point in the play." With Glen D. Hunter's "Modern Recordings of *Hamlet* in English" we move away from reading the play to hearing the play in nine different versions whose salient characteristics are epitomised in an analytical chart for ready reference.

R.W.D.

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* Lamb described the tragedies; Mary, the comedies.

Hamlet as a Vision of Renewal

WILLIAM E. SHEIDLEY

> *Hamlet* is no mere word game. We can make sense out of *Hamlet* just as we can make sense out of our world, by reading both against revenge. This is the way Shakespeare wanted *Hamlet* to be read and the way it should have been read long ago. If now, at such a time in our history, we still cannot read *Hamlet* against revenge, who ever will?
>
> —René Girard[1]

For René Girard, *Hamlet*, like Judaeo-Christian scripture, calls into question the established ordering principles of human society, grounded as they are, according to Girard, in systems of ritual immolation and revenge that conceal our violence and fear. Stripping the veil from these institutions confronts us with a choice between uncontrolled reciprocal violence and the renunciation of revenge—a renunciation we are afraid to risk, despite lip service paid to "the Golden Rule," because we fear that not to victimize is to become a victim. We have therefore consistently misinterpreted both *Hamlet* and scripture, Girard maintains, in order to screen ourselves from their implications. The *Hamlet* problem has thus usually become not how the prince can escape from the cycle of revenge but why he hesitates to plunge into it. Girard renders the bankruptcy of such attitudes by imagining a Hamlet of today, his finger poised over the ultimate instrument of modern reciprocal violence, surrounded by droves of critics clamoring that he should "stop shilly-shallying and push that nuclear button like a real man."[2] In *Hamlet* Girard himself reads a revelation of a post-sacrificial, post-retributive moral order much less direct than that of the New Testament.[3] He regards the paralyzed, secretive, and corrupt world of the play as representing the "undifferentiated no man's land between revenge and no revenge in which we ourselves are still living" (p. 296) and speaks of a "silence at the heart of *Hamlet*" (p. 295) resulting from Shakespeare's difficulty in using the revenge-tragedy genre to criticize revenge. Comparing the structure of imagery in *Hamlet* to that found in visions of social, cultural, and personal renewal as described in a recent book by John Weir Perry, however, puts a voice in that silence and suggests that the play does indeed propound a moral reordering parallel to and as radical as that which Girard has in view.[4]

The Heart of History

Perry's psychological and ethnological study of personal and cultural renewal in times of stress, *The Heart of History: Individuality in Evolution*,[5] explores a process rooted in the deepest levels of the human psyche and expressed in the broadest movements of human history. He argues that cultures confronted with new circumstances not accommodated by their former governing myth or image of the world often create through visionary individuals new myths around which to reorganize. He finds models of the process in primitive societies disrupted by conquest as well as in the histories of ancient Egypt, China, India, and the Middle East. A pattern emerges in which the principle of social cohesion develops under the guidance of visionaries from the submersion of the self in the person of the Bronze Age king through several stages to the diffusion of selfless compassionate love among all members of the society. A psychotherapist influenced by Jung, Perry has treated psychotic young adults "undergoing a process of reorganization in which an old form of the self was being outgrown and supplanted by a renewed form" (p. 5). In their fantasies, narratives, and drawings, he has observed imagery and political, cultural, and cosmic preoccupations identical to those of the visionary prophets. He finds the same images and issues in certain literary works, and understands all three types of vision to emanate from the unconscious psychic center within each individual, in response to personal or cultural needs. Evidently, he concludes, "the world renewal that once took place on the collective level, in the great ceremonial festivals of the sacral kingships, has shifted over the centuries from its externalized form in myth and ritual traditions to its internalized counterpart in the spontaneous myth-making process of individuals" (p. 56). Although he does not discuss *Hamlet* or Shakespeare, Perry would surely not be surprised to find in this play about personal and political crisis in Denmark (composed, as some have suggested, at a point of crisis in the life of its author and his society[6]) a set of images, issues, and themes consistent with those he defines and embodying the collapse of an old order based on reciprocal violence and a vision of a new principle of community.

Perry's survey of cultural transformations recognizes the following general stages. First, at the time of the Bronze Age Urban Revolution, the order of the city-state depended on the projection of the individual consciousness upon the sacral king, who, seated at the center of the realm, carefully observed the annual and daily rituals, including ceremonies of death and rebirth, sacred marriage, and extension of dominion in all directions from the throne, that were necessary to ensure the society's well-being. For Girard, this state of affairs would represent an operative sacrificial cult, erected upon a series of illusions serving to hide the violence at its base. Eventually, Perry explains, the king's unique prerogatives of individuality and responsibility for *rule* and *care* were usurped and the kingdoms racked by conflicts among ambitious and aggressive warlords in a feudal "Time of Troubles." In response to the social disintegration attendant upon such upheavals and the failure of the established cult, prophets ushered in what Perry terms the "Age of Democratization of Kingly Forms," inveighing against decadence and teaching that "the essential qualities and functions of the kingship in actuality belonged to the inner psychic life of gifted individuals, to be cultivated in their spiritual development in practices that were derived from the royal ceremonial" (p. ix). The culture of inwardness and personal discipline for the elite did not fully provide for the order of society at large, and in China, India, and eventually elsewhere, visionaries further propounded "the concept of human-hearted caring and compassion as the desirable bonding force in social cohesion" (p. ix). Such visions have always proved, of course, more hopeful than descriptive, for fully to order a society, love must triumph in every heart.

Hamlet recapitulates the historical process outlined by Perry, moving from a remembered state of order in Denmark under old King Hamlet through a period of usurpation, conflict, and disorder in the realm and on to a new, ambiguous final status quo. Hamlet himself embodies both the internalization of the kingly forms in his honorable self-governance at the duel and also "the principle of compassionate brotherhood" (p. ix) in his loving and forgiving speeches to Laertes.[7] Tragically, however, the world portrayed in the play remains largely unredeemed, and it devours Hamlet as the world has devoured so many messengers of compassionate love. Horatio, an epitome of self-rule, remains behind as Hamlet's apostle, twinned with Fortinbras, the strong-armed imposer of order in the state.[8] Fortinbras claims to assume the throne "with sorrow," and Horatio's story as he abstracts it will be dark indeed (5.2.393, 385-390).[9] If he reports Hamlet and his cause aright, however, a more hopeful myth may be discerned in it by an audience prepared with Girard to read the play "against revenge." Perry says, "Through these mythic visions, history was finding its heart" (p. ix).

As an objective character in a play, Hamlet occupies a different literary space from the first-person dreamers of visionary narratives or their variously projected selves, but he has some visionary traits.[10] "He waxes desperate with imagination," Horatio says as the Prince follows the Ghost. Hearing the apparition's story, Hamlet exclaims, "O my prophetic soul!" His "lunacy" (2.2.49), however feigned, his obscure remarks, and his withdrawal from the world ally him with the visionary type (cf. Perry, 35-36), and Gertrude's account of him in her closet staring at the Ghost describes a visionary trance (3.4.117-122). Hamlet's frequent soliloquies confide his inner world to us, and he is a poet whose revisions of *The Murder of Gonzago* presumably represent what he sees with his erected wit as truth.[11]

Although Shakespeare's play does not take the form of a Vision Delivered unto Hamlet, the images that constitute it, whether voiced by Hamlet or otherwise presented, parallel the typical contents of the visions of personal and cultural renewal Perry has studied. Among their characteristic elements also found in *Hamlet* are these: (1) Recalling the ceremonial death and rebirth of the sacral king. In a vision of renewal, time is set back to the beginning, to birth and to creation, marking a death of the former self or state of affairs and a rebirth or new beginning.[12] (2) Just as the throne of the sacral king was located at the center of his realm and at the center and starting point of the world, which spread out around him in a quadrated circle or mandala, so the vision takes place at the center of the world and springs from the center of the self, similarly represented in Jungian symbolism by the mandala. (3) Around and across that midpoint of the self and world, political and moral forces clash in chaotic struggles, and in the visions these oppositions are projected on a cosmic scale, often involving destruction of the world as a prelude to renewal. (4) The opposing elements collide, mirror and reverse into one another, and join together. (5) Finally, the visionaries often feel themselves charged with a mission of leadership to set the world in order by promulgating and putting into practice what has been revealed to them.

Hamlet incorporates all these themes within its mainly realistic form, sometimes through metaphor and connotation, sometimes more directly. The remainder of this essay examines them in turn to show their presence and their impact in the play. Most of the images and interpretations treated below are familiar ones, and it is precisely the familiar, well known *Hamlet* that embodies a vision of renewal.

Returning to Begin Anew

From the first scene on, the imagination is called to moments of beginning. The play opens at midnight, as the clock renews its counting of the hours, and the Ghost walks at the stroke of one. In his prayer, Claudius reverts to the beginning of human history when he compares his deed to that of Cain

(3.3.37-38), who committed, as we are reminded in the graveyard, "the first murder" (5.1.76). The gravediggers themselves bespeak the start of things as well as the end, for they "hold up Adam's profession." Furthermore, one of them took up the spade on the day of the first event of the plot, which we have heard about in the first scene of the play, King Hamlet's victory over old Fortinbras. Thus the figurative return to creation is linked to the literal beginning of the story, and, as if to ensure the activation of the return-and-rebirth archetype, the gravedigger points out, "It was that very day that young Hamlet was born."

The themes of regression and renewal function on the personal level as well. Hamlet informs Polonius that he could be young again "if like a crab you could go backward" (2.2.203-204) and describes him as a "great baby / . . . not yet out of his swaddling clouts," to which Rosencrantz adds, "Happily he is the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice a child" (2.2.378-381). Polonius is quite satisfied with himself as he is, but Claudius contemplates starting over, charging his "heart with strings of steel, / Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe" (3.3.70-71). Claudius would *like* to be reborn, if only he could keep his ill-gotten gains, and he ponders whether there is "rain enough in the sweet heavens" to cleanse his bloody hand (3.3.45). In the temporal perspective beginning with Cain, Noah's flood indicates how much watery purgation might be needed, but it is Hamlet, not Claudius, who undergoes a sea-change and emerges, like a newborn "set naked" (4.7.42) on the kingdom, newly baptized "Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.251).[13]

When the crowing of the cock in the opening scene frightens away the apparition of Denmark's past and occasions thoughts about "our Saviour's birth," the watchmen hurry off to find "young Hamlet." The awkwardness of the Prince's situation is reflected in his adolescence. Whatever his age in years, he perforce hovers on the threshold of mature status, and the rebirth that brings about his death is an initiation into adulthood.[14] In the second scene, his mother and stepfather as much as tell him to "grow up." In contrast to a patient discussed by Perry (pp. 41-42) who in her process of renewal regressed to childish feelings and imagined herself in the Garden of Eden, Hamlet sees his world as an "unweeded garden" (1.2.135) and, when called to his mother's closet for another scolding, rejects the role of errant child.

At this moment Hamlet has taken up his sword to join the fray in Denmark's Time of Troubles. Like the bloody avenger Pyrrhus—a perfect instance of the aggressive individuals that tore apart the order of the sacral kings—Hamlet is about to slaughter an old man and cause a woman grief. Earlier, Claudius has expressed his fear of a new birth in Hamlet:

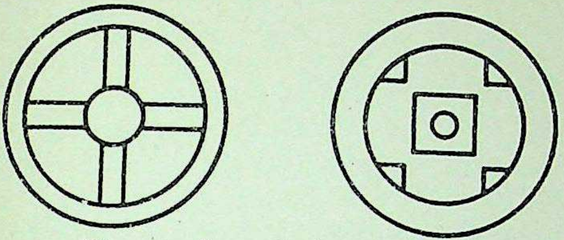

Figure 1. *a*. Diagram of sun wheel. *b*. Diagram of Han mirror.

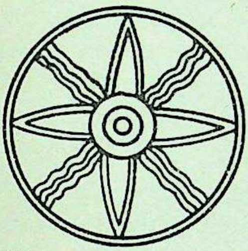

Figure 2. Emblem of Akkadian sun-god.

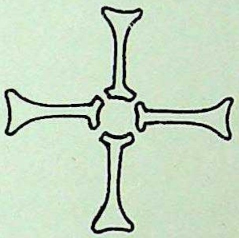

Figure 3. Emblem of Akkadian sky-god.

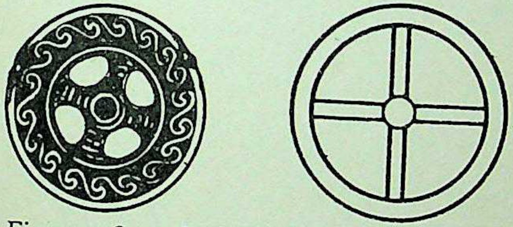

Figure 4. Sun wheels. *a*. Mycenaean. *b*. Greek.

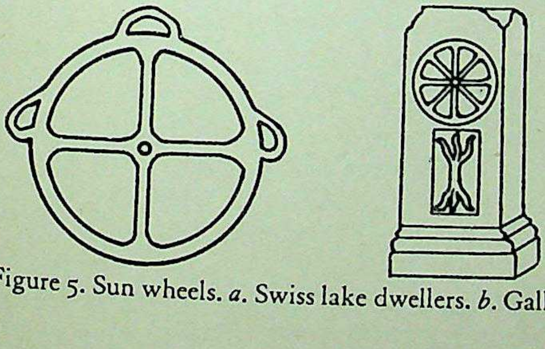

Figure 5. Sun wheels. *a*. Swiss lake dwellers. *b*. Gallic.

By permission of John Weir Perry (*The Self in Psychotic Process*, see n. 5 below).

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There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger . . . .

(3.1.166-169)

Something dangerous *is* being born in Hamlet as his mind struggles with a problem he cannot solve by reference to conventional norms, but not the aggressive stratagem Claudius may suppose. Hamlet is hatching a new image of the world and his role in it that will defeat Claudius by exposing Hamlet to mortal danger. When Polonius falls out of his hiding place, Hamlet learns that he cannot control events, no matter how strong his will. Later, when he discloses himself at Ophelia's grave, he steps into the arms of his enemies in order to make a point about honesty and love.

The graveyard scene, climaxed by the revelation of the new Hamlet, directly follows Claudius and Laertes' secret plotting to revenge Polonius (4.7), a passage that begins with the Norman horseman Lamord[15] and ends with Ophelia's demise. Then, as by the logic of a dream, we find ourselves immediately in the graveyard.[16] Thus the play's accelerating series of deaths has brought us to the intimate contemplation of mortality in a place where we think back to Adam and to Cain and witness the rebirth of Denmark's rightful king[17] and the new way of living he has found.

"Hid . . . Within the Centre"

The sacral king's ceremonial death and rebirth and the life and order-giving rituals of his rule took place at the center of his kingdom and the center of the world. Internalized and expressed in the mandala symbol, this mythic psychic center, "superordinate to the ego," structures the visionary imagination "when the self is engaged in the tremendously powerful process of reorganization" (Perry, p. 56). Perry reproduces Bronze Age city plans and diagrams of the cosmos as well as his patients' illustrations of their visions—all in mandala form.[18] *Hamlet*, too, takes place in the figurative center of its imagined world, and one of its most famous images recycles the archetype of the king as vital center of his realm.

Besides serving as the royal court of Denmark, Elsinore stands at the center of the play's geography,[19] with other regions arrayed at compass points around it: Norway to the north, Poland east, Wittenberg and Paris roughly in the south, and England to the west. Elsinore becomes a hub for travel:[20] the ambassadors to Norway, Laertes and Reynaldo to Paris, Hamlet and Horatio from Wittenberg. Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and the Players are drawn into the center, while Hamlet, setting out for England, crosses tracks with Fortinbras passing through to Poland. Later, Fortinbras returns just as the English ambassadors show up from the opposite direction to tell a king who is dead of their obedience to a command he never gave.

In *Hamlet*, the center cannot hold because the corrupted kingship has lost its power to order and sustain.[21] Fortinbras supposes the "state to be disjoint and out of frame" (1.2.20) as a result of King Hamlet's death, and eventually sees his thought confirmed. The Player King and Player Queen ornately review the history of their marriage by calculating the trips of the sun through the zodiac and the moon's revolutions around the world, creating an image of the crowned pair seated together at the cosmic center of circling heavenly bodies (3.2.150-57), rather like some of the cosmic mandalas described by Perry (pp. 53-55). This inset play holds a mirror up to the world of *Hamlet*, and in both the image will collapse.

In order to validate their covert activity on behalf of Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern piously refer to the traditional idea of the king as the sustainer and protector of "those many many bodies . . . That live and feed upon your Majesty" (3.3.9-10), but their image of the realm as

> a massy wheel
> Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
> To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
> Are mortis'd and adjoin'd . . .
>
> (3.3.17-20)

figures not cohesion and eternal continuity but "boist'rous ruin" (3.3.22). The mandala dissolves into Fortune's wheel, which, as in the First Player's speech, disintegrates and rolls "down the hill of heaven / As low as to the fiends" (2.2.491-492).[22] If the king at the center falls, the realm falls with him, and his sighs become "a general groan" (3.3.23). Laertes explains to Ophelia that Hamlet may not "carve for himself": "His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own" but "circumscrib'd/ Unto the voice and yielding of that body / Whereof he is the head" (1.3.20, 17, 22-24). In thrusting himself to the center to possess the queen and serve his own ambition, Claudius has tried to carve for himself, and the play works out the process by which the failed governing principle of self and state must be renewed.

In the archaic order outlined in these passages, the character of what lies at the center is all-important, and in *Hamlet* it is corrupt and concealed.

Polonius is referring to a geocentric cosmos when he resolves to find "Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed / Within the centre" (2.2.158-159), and Hamlet grimly envisions the emergence: "Foul deeds will rise, / Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes" (1.2.257-258). Although Hamlet himself claims to "have that within which passes show" (1.2.85) and conceals himself behind his antic mask, he places at his own center a model of self-governance opposite to that of Claudius when he tells Horatio,

> Give me that man
> That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
> In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
> As I do thee.
>
> (3.2.71-74)

The image of the all-suffering stoic, a man not mortised and adjoined to Fortune's wheel but able to withstand its slings and arrows, helps to form the renewed self of Hamlet that would have "prov'd most royal" (5.2.403).

Just after pronouncing that phrase in Hamlet's epitaph, Fortinbras orders a cannonade, and the play ends as it has been punctuated throughout, with a peal of ordnance. The last time shots rang out was during the duel, called for by Claudius in terms placing this battle at the center of a cosmic stage:

> And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
> The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
> The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
> "Now the King drinks to Hamlet."
>
> (5.2.272-275)

This image just before the end recalls one near the beginning, in which "the great cannon to the clouds shall tell, / And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again, / Re-speaking earthly thunder" (1.2.126-128). The noisy ceremony defines Claudius precisely. The advent of the Bronze Age monarchies brought a new storm- or thunder-god to the pantheons, expressing the expansionist, military aspect of the kingship (Perry, 8, 114, 176-177), an attribute readily adopted by the warlords of the Times of Troubles. As Pyrrhus pauses, sword raised over Priam, the stillness is the calm before a storm, and his action when he falls to work is like "the dreadful thunder" (2.2.479-482). A poor excuse for a storm-god, Claudius makes thunder when he drinks, and to Hamlet his bad habit blights the nation of which he is the rotten core.

At Ophelia's funeral, Hamlet mocks Laertes for sounding to the skies:

> What is he whose grief
> Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
> Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand
> Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
> Hamlet the Dane.
>
> (5.1.247-251)

These words compose a striking image of the ring of planet-gods frozen in their orbits by the cries of Laertes in his sister's grave, which they regard and surround. Into this cosmic center Hamlet strides, grandly proclaiming his identity as the rightful king. In the previous 250 lines we have harkened back to Hamlet's birth and to the beginning of time, surveyed all human life, and located its quintessence in the grave. Now as he emerges from concealment, Hamlet is reborn in the imaginative central place. He risks all to establish his love for Ophelia and to criticize Laertes' inflated style.[23] Claudius, who cannot grasp such principles as love, honesty, self-governance, and purity of style, can only remark, "O, he is mad, Laertes" (5.1.267).

Cosmic Warfare, Chaos, and the End of All

The magniloquence that projects the play's conflicts upon the heavens also marks the visions of renewal discussed by Perry, where reordering of private values takes place in terms of geopolitics and where the advent of a new social culture only follows the cataclysmic destruction of the old. Throughout *Hamlet*, the private lives and deaths of royal personages are quite naturally viewed in public terms; the struggle for power in Denmark evokes memories of epoch-making falls; and doomsday itself is often close to mind.

When Gertrude misbehaves, Hamlet views *all* women as frail and the world as an unweeded garden. The *time* is out of joint, not just affairs in Elsinore. When Hamlet says "Denmark's a prison," Rosencrantz denies it by concluding "Then is the world one" (2.2.243-244), but the generalization is made. From the outset, in true Renaissance humanist style, current events recall landmarks from antiquity. Horatio likens the appearance of the Ghost to what took place "In the most high and palmy state of Rome / A little ere the mightiest Julius fell" (1.1.116-117), and we are reminded again of those events leading to the institution of a new world order when Hamlet asks Polonius about his acting career (3.2.97-105). Hamlet refers to Nero as matricide, but the emperor's name also evokes the image of a city crumbling in flames, just like the First Player's description of the fall of Troy (2.2.470-472), the classic instance of a society's dismemberment by vengeful chieftains and the debility of a Bronze Age king.[25] Laertes acts the part of a rebellious chieftain when he storms Elsinore to force a new beginning:

> The rabble call him lord,
> And as the world were now but to begin,
> Antiquity forgot, custom not known—
> . . . .
>
> They cry, "Choose we! Laertes shall be king."
>
> (4.5.102-104, 106)

Claudius is thinking of the Titans' war against Jove when he asks Laertes why "thy rebellion looks so giant-like" (4.5.121), but Hamlet knows that already "This realm dismantled was / Of Jove himself," and aptly casts Claudius in the rebel's role (3.2.276-277).

These epochal upheavals and outbursts of disorder, fearful in themselves, betoken the general ruin elaborated in many visionary writings, particularly the Hebrew prophetic and apocryphal books (see Perry, 112-124) and the Book of Revelation. Horatio says that, in Rome, among the many portents, one star "Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse" (1.1.123). When Rosencrantz jests to Hamlet that "the world's grown honest," the Prince replies, "Then is doomsday near. But your news is not true" (2.2.237-238). In the apocalyptic finale, however, the world of the play does in effect grow honest, as Hamlet strips off his antic disposition, Laertes reveals everything, and the lying voice of Claudius is stilled, to be replaced by blunt Fortinbras and Horatio, who will "truly deliver" his report (5.2.391). The graveyard scene guides the imagination through remembrance of death to consideration of the final end.[26] The grave-maker's houses last "till doomsday" (5.1.59), and Ophelia is laid to rest "Till the last trumpet" (5.1.205-206). The renewal to which that trumpet calls, however, will be imaged first in the reordered principles of Hamlet's heart.

Opposites and Mirrors

The feature of Perry's visions of renewal most important in *Hamlet* is the rendering of things as "mighty opposites" (5.2.62), which clash, reflect each other, change places, and join or fuse in a restructured image of the world where new polarities and distinctions replace the old (Perry, 5, 57). Stages of this process appear in drawings done by Perry's patients; in *Hamlet*, rhetoric, imagery, and dramatic situations trace a progression from the breakdown of conventional oppositions despite efforts to sustain them, through a period in which the hidden nature of opposing elements appears in their reflections, to the emergence of altered scales of value along a different axis, where old oppositions lose their meaning.

Although diplomacy diverts attack, the play opens in an atmosphere of war. Soon the enmity will be resolved when a Norwegian takes the Danish throne. Meanwhile, the international conflict provides a background of tension against which other dialectic interactions are played out. After listening to Claudius joining opposites by rhetoric in the second scene,[27] Hamlet bursts out in his first soliloquy to reassert differences—differences between his uncle and his father, his mother as she once was and as she is now, Hyperion and a satyr, himself and Hercules. Elsinore, where "The funeral bak'd meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (1.2.180-181), does not well sustain such distinctions, and Hamlet strives to shore them up, insisting "my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived. . . . I know a hawk from a handsaw" (2.2.372, 375).

Hamlet tells the Players how to hold a mirror up to nature, and he supposes that Claudius will see himself therein. Later, in the closet scene, he confronts his mother with a verbal "glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you" (3.4.18-19). In both cases, however, presumed oppositions come into question. In *The Mousetrap* the killer, "one Lucianus, nephew to the King" (3.2.239), reflects both Hamlet's enemy Claudius and Hamlet himself, and perhaps any of the "arrant knaves" that Hamlet lumps himself with in the nunnery scene (3.1.129). There he berates Ophelia by opposing *honest* to *fair* and then asserting that nowadays "the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness" (3.1.111-114). The Player King also shows how opposites mirror and become each other: "Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament; / Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident" (3.2.193-194).

In the closet scene, Hamlet uses different verbal parallels to reflect his mother's words back to her, transformed in meaning:

QUEEN. Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.
HAM. Mother, you have my father much offended.
QUEEN. Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.
HAM. Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

(3.4.8-11)

When he thinks he may have killed the king, Hamlet sets up even his deed as a glass for Gertrude, and by implication hers for him: ". . . almost as bad, good mother, / As kill a king and marry with his brother" (3.4.28-29). Scolding his mother as if she were his child, Hamlet labors to establish an opposition between Claudius and old Hamlet and to attune her to the scale of values they define.[28] After raising his father to the heavens along with Hyperion, Jove, Mars and Mercury, Hamlet swings back to describe Claudius in opposite and equally extreme terms as a murderer, villain, slave, vice, cutpurse, paddock, bat, and gib. On either side of the world-structuring line dividing old King Hamlet from Claudius lie clusters of morally distinct qualities: godlike virtue, courage, glory, health, strength, and love over against devilish vice, baseness, corruption, weakness, and animalistic lust. Unfortunately, the good side of this opposition is idealized and lives only in the past, while the bad side is real and present, as Hamlet recognizes when he complains that "in the fatness of these pursy times / Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg" (3.4.155-156).

When Gertrude confesses that he has "cleft [her] heart in twain" (3.4.158), Hamlet responds with an image of impossible choice: "O throw away the worser part of it, / And live the purer with the other half" (3.4.159-160), but then gives more constructive advice. Since Gertrude cannot *be* good, she should *act as if she were* good, and perhaps she will become better by force of habit. Thus one member of the opposed pair *vice and virtue* transforms itself into the other. Similarly, Hamlet remarks, "I must be cruel only to be kind" (3.4.180). Relishing the ironies that explode when "the enginer" is "Hoist with his own petard" (3.4.212), he notes that in death Polonius has become the quite different man he *should* have been when alive: "This counsellor / Is now most still, most secret, and most grave, / Who was in life a foolish prating knave" (3.4.217-219). Meanwhile, Hamlet himself has been transformed by the stroke of his blade through the arras from a potential agent of revenge to a potential object.[29]

Opposites also change places and fuse in what might be regarded as the first turn in the *danse macabre* of life and death that whirls through the rest of the play[30] when Hamlet says about the corpse, "heaven hath pleas'd it so, To punish me with this and this with me" (3.4.175-176). With Polonius "safely stowed" (4.2.1), Hamlet tells the king how death destroys all social ranks, and indeed the hierarchy of the animal kingdom itself: maggots crown the food chain, and "a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar" (4.3.30-31). Reflecting Claudius's earlier blurring of distinctions, but to a different end, Hamlet even denies gender and personal identity, calling the king "mother" because "Father and mother is man and wife, man and wife is one flesh" (4.3.54-55).

One polarity remains functional, however: that between "heaven" and "th'other place," only the latter of which could Claudius enter to look for Polonius (4.3.33-34). In death, rank and station get obliterated, but not grace or merit. When he first met the Ghost, Hamlet invoked and discarded this frame of reference, vowing to speak to the "questionable shape," no matter if it were "a spirit of health or goblin damn'd," "from heaven or . . . hell," of "wicked or charitable" intent (1.4.40-43).[31] Now, out of the chaos of contending forces a new understanding of what this opposition means emerges. Not everyone can see it, however. Laertes, a conventional thinker like his father, easily assents to a fallacious distinction proposed by Claudius, parallel to what the Ghost proposed to Hamlet, between his father's friends and foes (4.5.141-153). How much that lies athwart the true division between good and evil Laertes only learns in the finale.

The difficulty of analysis becomes humorously clear in the gravedigger's logic: "an act hath three branches—it is to act, to do, to perform" (5.1.11-12). This wise philosopher confuses (or fuses) *defense* with *offense* and agrees with the other Clown that what really determines Ophelia's burial place is not the manner of her death but her station in the world (5.1.22-25). Her privilege, however, will do her little good, as we learn by sifting through the graveyard loam. Hamlet assumes what seems the most certain distinction of all when he insists that the grave is surely "for the dead, not for the quick" (5.1.123), but we soon learn that any difference between the quick and the dead is a temporary illusion. A few moments later Laertes will be calling for the dust to be piled upon the quick and dead alike as he leaps into the grave with Ophelia's corpse (5.1.244), and Hamlet mockingly joins him: "Be buried quick with her, and so will I" (5.1.274)[32]

However awkward it may be on stage, the image of Hamlet and Laertes clashing in Ophelia's grave provides a perfect emblem of enmity rendered moot by a larger commonality. Both have lost a father and Ophelia, whom they loved; both are soon to be dissolved in death. Because Claudius has suborned Laertes, the play can end with a double vision of Hamlet in conflict with his adversary as he mercilessly dispatches the "incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane" (5.2.330), and also of Hamlet; transcending opposition and in concord with his adversary, as the duelists, having just killed each other, "exchange forgiveness" (5.2.334).

The Visionary Mission

The play's ambiguous ending reflects Hamlet's transformation. Like the visionaries discussed by Perry, Hamlet undertakes a mission of national leadership. Perry's patients "typically started with grossly grandiose claims

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. . . as heroes and heroines, saviors of the people, . . ." but they "gradually shifted to a new awareness of their capacities for loving relatedness, and their messianic program for reform was colored by a preoccupation with compassion, lovingness, and brotherhood" (p. 7). Hamlet succeeds in saving his world only when he becomes willing to give up himself.[33]

Prophets of personal and cultural renewal are burdened with vast responsibilities, as Hamlet feels when, observing that "The time is out of joint," he complains, "O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right" (1.5.196-197). He considers himself far from a type of Hercules (1.2.153), but Claudius acknowledges Hamlet's stature as "most immediate to our throne" (1.2.109) and a *great one* (3.1.190). Laertes portrays Hamlet to Ophelia as the sacral king himself (1.3.17-24), and when the Ghost appears to him on the battlements, Hamlet wrenches free of the cautious grasp of his commoner companions, proclaiming, "My fate cries out" (1.4.81).

Although he believes the heavens have made him "their scourge and minister" (3.4.177),[34] Hamlet is notoriously given to regarding his mission in perspective. Teasing Guildenstern, he ironically demurs from a presumed request to medicate the "marvellous distempered" king, "for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into more choler" (3.2.293, 297-299). Raising his sword to send the praying Claudius to heaven, he pauses: "That would be scann'd" (3.3.75). Together with his own and others' deeds, Hamlet's cogitations constitute a flow of images equivalent to visionary ideation, in which what is to be done to renew the psyche and the culture can take shape. Hamlet dies a killer and a lover, but what he kills in Claudius is in a symbolic sense the now discredited way of being a leader and a person that he finally takes it as his mission to destroy, both in himself and in his world.

Pyrrhus represents the leader as destroyer, avenger, regicide. Hamlet asks to hear about him, but after the hero's remorseless sword falls upon Priam, an element of compassion enters the story with the tearful Hecuba (2.2.498-514). The Player weeps; Polonius and Hamlet take pity on his vicarious grief; Hamlet instructs Polonius to treat the Players better than they deserve; and finally, no doubt with an ironic wink, he asks the Players not to mock the old man (2.2.515-539). Pondering what has just transpired, Hamlet surprisingly does not compare himself with Pyrrhus, but rather with the Player, whose power of emotion he feels he lacks. Hamlet would like to *act* in the same way that the Player would *speak* if he had Hamlet's "motive and cue for passion" (2.2.555). Presumably such action would involve a bloody deed like that of Pyrrhus, but Hamlet imagines the Player speaking words that would "cleave the general ear" (2.2.557) rather than himself hacking up a body. He criticizes himself for unpacking his heart with words, but then immediately returns to his plan of having murder speak the truth "With most miraculous organ" (2.2.590). Once the truth is out, however, the conflict between vengeance and compassion still obtains, and Hamlet warns the Ghost that his pity for his father may "convert / My stern effects," substituting "tears perchance for blood" (3.4.128-130). Hamlet still believes that what he feels for old King Hamlet *should* spur his rage against Claudius, but he finds it may be otherwise. Polonius's blood is on his sword, and the world is changing in his mind.

The unexpected consequence of thrusting through the arras helps change Hamlet's idea of his mission. As he compares himself to another ambitious warrior, Fortinbras, Hamlet finds his oppositions dissolving. He contrasts "bestial oblivion" (4.4.40) with "That capability and godlike reason" that can look "before and after" (4.4.38, 37), but he cannot tell whether *not* thinking or "thinking too precisely on th'event" has been the cause that "this thing's to do"—or that he lives to say so (4.4.41, 44). Thinking "on th'event" is just what Fortinbras does not do: he "Makes mouths at the invisible event" (4.4.50). Puffed with ambition and fighting for "an eggshell" (4.4.49, 53), Fortinbras provides a poor model. Hamlet considers that "Rightly to be great" (4.4.53) is to fight only for honor, and, having that motive, he vows to think bloody thoughts henceforth. Thus he turns his back on gain and safety. That he still connects his new principle of action, honor, with blood suggests the transformation of his values is incomplete, for the entrance in the next scene of the insane Ophelia, pathetic second victim of Hamlet's "rash and bloody deed" (3.4.28), must lead the audience to question his resolve.[35]

Bloody thoughts and an eye to the event mark Claudius and Laertes' plan to murder Hamlet as if by "accident" in the duel (4.7.67, 127-161). Intending to satisfy Laertes and protect Claudius, they have no regard for the meaning of their actions or the dishonorable means by which their ends are won. Hamlet, in contrast, although he praises the rashness that led to his escape, attributes the outcome to Providence rather than his own foresight. His sentence upon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern could be likened to a secret poisoned sword, but Hamlet defends the fitness of their fate, which tells the truth about their "baser nature" (5.2.60).

Horatio is impressed: "Why, what a king is this!" (5.2.62). Hamlet, who has just observed in the graveyard "To what base uses" (5.1.196) great men like Alexander and Caesar may return, considers his project against Claudius less a matter of greatness than of conscience: "is't not to be damn'd / To let this canker of our nature come / In further evil?" (5.7.68-70). He regrets the "tow'ring passion" (5.7.80) in which he forgot himself to Laertes: the manner in which a thing is done, it seems, outweighs its outcome, and the outcome is beyond the control of even the greatest doer of deeds, as Hamlet's jingle makes clear: "Let Hercules himself do what he may, / The cat will mew, and dog will have his day" (5.1.286-287).[36] Challenged to the treacherous duel by the absurdly mannered Osric, Hamlet makes a frank and courteous reply; warned that a trap may well await him, he states his new vision in the runic word *readiness* and enacts his double fate.

Hamlet would have made a most royal king, but like Perry's visionaries, his true importance lies not in what he does but in his message: "Had I but time . . . O I could tell you— / But let it be" (5.2.341-343). Hamlet's story, entrusted to Horatio, exists for us in Shakespeare's perplexing drama, where two world-images collide. Like the prophetic visions it resembles, *Hamlet* threatens us by revealing the futility of violence to keep us safe. If read "against revenge," as Girard urges, it may also evoke our admiration for the power of self-discipline and love to overcome disorder and give meaning to our dying life.

NOTES

1. René Girard, "Hamlet's Dull Revenge," in *Literary Theory / Renaissance Texts*, ed. Patricia Parker and David Quint (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 280-302 (orig. pub. *The Stanford Literature Review*, 1, no. 2 [Fall 1984], 159-200), 302.

2. Of course many critics and scholars have refused to join this chorus, notably Eleanor Prosser in *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967). More recently, Peter Mercer, in *"Hamlet" and the Acting of Revenge* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1987), has shown in terms compatible with Girard's that the moral structure of standard revenge tragedy unleashes an inhuman force upon the dramatic world that calls upon the hero "to strip himself of every vestige of nature" (p. 6) and that Shakespeare delivers his hero from the role of revenger by subverting the premises of the genre. It perhaps tends to confirm Girard's view of the power of reciprocal violence over our minds that Hamlet nonetheless remains in the popular imagination primarily a procrastinator who tediously balks at doing his job.

3. Maurice Abiteboule, in "Présence du Sacré dans *Hamlet:* Mythe Fondateur, Violence Rituelle et Crise Sacrificielle," *Mythes, Croyances et Religions dans le Monde Anglo-Saxon* (Université d'Avignon), 2 (1984), 33-50, applies terms and concepts from Girard's *La Violence et le Sacré* (1972) to argue that the play moves from the "founding violence" when Claudius kills his brother through "ritual violence" in the deaths of Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern to a new "founding violence" in the final scene. The approach yields insights about Hamlet's reluctance to stay in Elsinore and his failing effort to remain uncontaminated by the reciprocal violence of unbridled revenge, which Girard views as similar to a disease that spreads through a society. But Abiteboule neglects Girard's key concepts of the "surrogate victim" and the indispensable function of communal unanimity both in the founding violence and the sacrificial ritual that takes its place. Nor does Abiteboule explore the role of compassionate love and the issue of spiritual development through history of human cultures. See the English translation of Girard by Patrick Gregory, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

4. Many writers have recognized aspects of renewal in *Hamlet*. For example, J.A. Bryant, Jr.,

in *Hippolyta's View: Some Christian Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), 109-138, sees Hamlet as a type of Christ; Francis Fergusson, in *The Idea of a Theater* (New York: Anchor, 1953; orig. pub. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 109-154, likens the play to ancient ritual dramas enacting the myth of the year-god and sees Hamlet as a scapegoat-hero; Charles Eckert, in "The Festival Structure of the Orestes-Hamlet Tradition," *Comparative Literature*, 15 (1963), 321-337, explores the roots of the Hamlet story in new year and initiation rites; Craig A. Bernthal, in "'Self' Examination and Readiness in Hamlet," *Hamlet Studies*, 7 (1985), 38-51, draws on cognitive psychology to explain how Hamlet must pass through a period of inner turmoil and self-surrender before attaining a new self-identity; Richard Fly, in "Accommodating Death: The Ending of *Hamlet*," *Studies in English Literature*, 1500-1900, 24 (1984), 257-274, shows that Hamlet emerges from despair and dissolution to a new integrity thanks to his discriminating intellect; Randall A. Clack, in "Hamlet: Enter Hero," M.A. Thesis, University of Alabama in Birmingham, 1984, parallels Hamlet's story to the heroic "monomyth" mainly as defined by Joseph Campbell; and James L. Calderwood, in *To Be and Not To Be: Negation and Metadrama in "Hamlet"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), shows how the play "passes . . . from deconstruction to reconstruction" (p. xv).

5. John Weir Perry, *The Heart of History: Individuality in Evolution*, SUNY Series in Transpersonal and Humanistic Psychology (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987). Perry has developed his thesis through the following studies: *The Self in Psychotic Process* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953); "Reconstitutive Process in the Psychopathology of the Self," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 96 (1962), 853-876; *Lord of the Four Quarters: Myths of the Royal Father* (New York: Braziller, 1966); "Reflections of the Nature of the Kingship Archetype," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 11 (1966), 147-162; "The Messianic Hero," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 17 (1972), 184-198; *The Far Side of Madness* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), which reprints a number of Perry's previously published studies not listed here; *Roots of Renewal in Myth and Madness* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976); and "Psychosis and the Visionary Mind," *Journal of Altered States of Consciousness*, 3 (1977), 5-14.

   For a discussion of Perry, his thesis, his relation to Jung, and his successful clinical techniques, see J. Marvin Spiegelman, "Another kind of Roots" (a review of *Roots of Renewal), Contemporary Psychology*, 22 (1977), 775-776.

6. For example, Bryant, n. 4 above, (117) links *Hamlet* to the disintegration of the Renaissance cultural synthesis; Roland Mushat Frye, *The Renaissance "Hamlet" : Issues and Responses in 1600* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), demonstrates the play's treatment of numerous troubling contemporary dilemmas, social, political, and philosophical; and Theodore Lidz, in *Hamlet's Enemy: Madness and Myth in "Hamlet"* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), surmises that "in writing *Hamlet*, [Shakespeare] was attempting to resolve a major intrapsychic crisis that greatly threatened his equanimity" (p. 129).

7. For a discussion of the emergence of compassionate love in Hamlet as a response to violence and corruption in his world, see Nigel Alexander, *Poison, Play, and Duel: A Study in Hamlet* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).

8. On the condition of Denmark as left to Fortinbras and Horatio, see Rudiger Imhof, "Fortinbras Ante Portas: The Role and Significance of Fortinbras in *Hamlet*," *Hamlet Studies*, 8 (1986), 8-29, which surveys previous opinions, and Ghanshiam Sharma, "The Function of Horatio in Hamlet," *Hamlet Studies*, 8 (1986), 30-39.

9. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1982), cited in the text.

10. Wolfgang Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), argues that Hamlet is "a visionary, a seer" (p. 106). Marvin Spevack, "Hamlet and Imagery: The Mind's Eye," *Die Neueren Sprachen*, n.s. 5 (1966), 203-212, sees Hamlet trapped within a destructive private vision. Vestiges in Shakespeare's Hamlet of the folkloric prophet-hero of Saxo and Belleforest interest Werner Habicht, "Hamlet's Prophetic Soul: An Obscured Myth?" in *Mythe et Histoire*, ed. M.T. Jones-Davies, Société Française Shakespeare, Actes du Congrès, 1983 (Paris: Jean Touzot, 1984), pp. 113-126, while William Rossky, "Hamlet as Jeremiah," *Hamlet Studies*, 1 (1979), 101-108, likens the Prince to the Old Testament Prophet.

11. As Sir Philip Sidney put it, who attributed to poets the role of seer and designated as poets and prophets and even Jesus Christ. See *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Forrest G. Robinson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970), 10-12, 17, 30.

12. In an earlier article Perry linked the visionary pattern to the solar-hero myth, finding the motif of death and rebirth always present among the group of patients undergoing visionary reorganization of the self ("Messianic Hero," n. 5 above, 185, 192).

13. See Clack (n. 4 above), 45-47, and J. Gold, "Hamlet's Sea-Change," *English*, 15 (1964), 53-55.

14. See Eckert (n. 4 above) for a discussion of vestiges of initiation rites in the Hamlet tradition. Lidz, n. 6 above, (107) remarks that Hamlet "symbolizes youth on the threshold of adulthood."

15. Jenkins proposes the obvious gloss on the name: *la mort* (4.7.91, n.).

16. The juxtaposition of these scenes interests Harry Morris, *Last Things in Shakespeare* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1985), 60, as emphasizing the parallel and contrast between Laertes and Hamlet.

17. Hamlet's right to the throne is argued by John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in "Hamlet,"* 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 30-38, and endorsed by Morris, n. 16 above, 44-47.

18. Perry, n. 5 above, 48-53. For more detailed accounts of some patients in the context of archaic ritual, see his *Roots of Renewal and Far Side of Madness;* for better reproductions of the drawings and artifacts, see his "Reconstitutive Process." In *Self and Psychotic Process* he analyzes a single case and provides still better illustrations.

19. For geographical details as they might have been conceived in Shakespeare's time, see Gunnar Sjögren, "The Geography of Hamlet," in his *Hamlet the Dane: Ten Essays* (Lund, Sweden: Liber Forlag, 1983), 46-53, orig. pub. *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 1964-65; for the central location of Elsinore as represented in sixteenth-century cartography and the thematic implications of that placement, see Keith Brown, "Hamlet's Place on the Map," *Shakespeare Studies*, 4 (1968), 160-182.

20 Calderwood (n.4 above), 164 counts 16 arrivals and 11 departures. P.J. Aldus, in *Mousetrap: Structure and Meaning in "Hamlet"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), discusses physical and metaphorical travel in *Hamlet*, providing mandala-like diagrams (122-129).

21. For a discussion of this issue in different terms, see Janet S. Hertzbach "Hamlet and the Integrity of Majesty," *Hamlet Studies*, 5 (1983), 40-51. See also Morris (n. 16 above), 41-48.

22. On the iconography behind these two wheel images, see Frye (n. 6 above), 121-131.

23. On the continuity between contemplation of mortality and the resolution to live well, see Frye (n. 6 above), 252; for a treatment of Hamlet's assumption at this moment of his social and cosmic role, see Matthew N. Proser, "Madness, Revenge,and the Metaphor of the Theater in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Pirandello's *Henry IV*," *Modern Drama*, 24 (1981), 338-352; on Hamlet's belated rediscovery of his love for Ophelia, see Inga-Stina Ewbank, "*Hamlet* and the Power of Words," in *Aspects of "Hamlet,"* ed. Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 84-101, 97-100, (orig. pub. *Shakespeare Survey*, 1977), who remarks, "Hamlet's vision of Ophelia has changed with his vision of the world" (97).

24. David Kaula, "*Hamlet* and the Image of Both Churches," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 24 (1984), 241-255, discusses the play's use of images and ideas drawn from Tudor apocalyptic literature and its scriptural base. See also Cherrell Guilfoyle, "King Hamlet's Two Successors," *Comparative Drama*, 15 (1981), 120-138, who reads the play as a dramatization of the reign of the Antichrist, and Morris (n. 16 above), 34-44, who shows the traditional signs of doomsday in *Hamlet*, stressing the "topsy-turvy" state of affairs.

25. Kaula (n. 24 above) 241-243, 249-251 links both Julius Caesar and the fall of Troy to the Tudor view of the apocalypse.

26. On the relationship of *Hamlet* to the *memento mori* tradition, see Frye (n. 6 above), 205-253, and Morris (n. 16 above) "Appendix: The *memento-mori* Lyric" (311-341), an expansion of his "*Hamlet* as a *memento-mori* Poem," *PMLA*, 85 (1970), 1035-1040.

27. Stephen Booth remarks, "The excessively lubricated rhetoric by which Claudius makes unnatural connections between moral contraries is as gross and sweaty as the incestuous marriage itself"— "On the Value of *Hamlet*," in *Reinterpretations of Elizabethan Drama*, ed. Norman Rabkin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 137-176, 149. See also Ewbank (n. 23 above), 92.

28. For a view of the opposition between King Hamlet and Claudius as a social myth of "difference" establishing values and meanings, of the obliteration of that difference by Gertrude's actions, and of Hamlet's struggle to reestablish the myth, see Joel Fineman, "Fratricide and Cuckoldry: Shakespeare's Doubles," in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 70-128, orig. pub. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 64 (1977). To Jenkins (128-132), the fraternal link between these two opposites symbolizes human nature. For Girard (n. 1 above) "Claudius and old Hamlet . . . are brothers in murder and revenge," since in mythology "brotherhood is almost invariably associated with the reciprocity of revenge" and functions as "a symbol of violent desymbolization, the sign paradoxically that there are no more signs and that a warring confusion tends to prevail everywhere," 284.

29. As pointed out by Jenkins (n. 9 above), 99, 143-144.

30. One the use of *danse macabre* motifs in *Hamlet*, see Frye (n. 6 above), 205-253; Bettie Anne Doebler, "*Hamlet:* A Grave Scene and Its Audience," *Hamlet Studies*, 3 (1981), 68-82; and Morris (n. 16 above), 1-75.

31. The eschatological status of the Ghost has occasioned much critical debate, conveniently reviewed by Morris (n. 16 above), 19-33, who sides with those who see it as a damned soul but insists that Hamlet nonetheless does not incur damnation by killing Claudius. Viewed thus, the question of the Ghost's nature involves yet another opposition that dissolves into a new polarity: what matters is not the merit of the prompter but the virtue of the deed.

32. Calderwood (n.4 above), 98-99 offers a similar treatment of these passages within the play's "general erosion of distinctions."

33. Matthew N. Proser, in "Hamlet and the Name of Action," in *Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. Gordon Ross Smith (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1965), pp. 84-114, shows how "Hamlet's acquiescence to his destined role" derives from recognizing "the predicament of our annihilation that relates us" (104).

34. Hamlet's phrase fuses opposing terms. R.W. Dent, "Hamlet: Scourge and Minister," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 29 (1978), 82-84, questions the distinction between them established by Fredson Bowers in "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 740-749, while Morris (n. 16 above) 16, n. 5, 60 views the Prince as escaping the role of "revenger/scourge" to become "king/minister."

35. Robert W. Witt argues in "Reason Is Not Enough: Hamlet's Recognition," *Hamlet Studies*, 2 (1980), 47-58, that Hamlet's embrace of bloody thoughts here marks the point at which he surrenders reason to faith in Providence. Perry, n. 5 above (especially in "Psychosis and the Visionary Mind") links the transition in the agency of social order from power and control to compassionate love to the reassertion of the receptive, "feminine" Eros principle against the assertive, "masculine" Logos principle. Both principles govern Hamlet's behavior in the final scene.

36. Cf. Alexander (n. 7 above), 72: "Even in the face of the silence of death, Hamlet asserts that it matters how the 'particular' part is played."

Pulled from the Melodious Lay: "A World Elsewhere" and the Songs of *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*

JEFFREY P. BECK

"Proceed, proceed," enjoins the good Duke Senior at the conclusion of *As Yo* *Like It*, leading the brides, bridegrooms, Hymen, and other masquers in merry measure. Rosalind remains on stage a moment longer as Epilogue t tease her audience with the fragile gaiety of her romance role. Shakespear soon proceeded from the greenwood of Arden to the haunted battlements o Elsinore. *As You Like It* has admitted special comparison with *Hamlet* for least two compelling reasons: the proximate dates of the plays, forming alon with *Twelfth Night* a hinge at 1600 between the comic and tragic phases o Shakespeare's career; and the repetition of character types (e.g., antic an melancholiac), plot devices (e.g., multiple disguises), and themes (e.g., th multiplicity of personality, the world as stage) in the plays. Barbara Bono, f example, analyzes Rosalind's "holiday humor" as a protective strategy ak to Hamlet's "antic disposition;"[1] and in *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare* *Tragedies*, Susan Snyder contrasts Rosalind's and Hamlet's role-playing, a she traces the transfer of comic structures to Hamlet. Assuming Snyder analysis of comic and tragic forms, I would like to propose that the reworki of another comic stock-in-trade especially prominent in *As You Like It*--t popular song—evokes the "world elsewhere" that is unravelled in *Haml*

While critics have noted comic strands in the songs of Hamlet, Opheli and the sexton, they have not sufficiently appreciated how the mangled lyr foil a golden world of comedy against the tragic complications of the dram Joseph McCullen, Jr. construed Ophelia's songs as "comic relief," althou he added that more reflective spectators would experience "only a heighte ing of tragic emotions" upon hearing them.[3] John Long explained incisive how Ophelia's balladry resembles an antic medley, making her an unwitt fool, even as Hamlet's catches make him a witting one.[4] Most sensitive F.W. Sternfeld recognized that Shakespeare knit comic songs into the "tra fabric" of *Hamlet*, and that Ophelia's "Hey non nonny" recalls the spri time lyrics of *As You Like It*.[5] Sternfeld remarked on Ophelia's allusion to the comic world, but primarily as evidence of her madness: her songs are grossly inappropriate, contributing to her "characterization as a helpless and powerless creature" and making "her so poignantly pathetic."[6]

Obviously, Ophelia's songs are far from a laughing matter. The very pathos of the songs in *Hamlet*, however, depends on an implicit contrast with the world of comic song—with its possibilities, its gratified love, its social well-being. With their childhood fancies and ideals, Hamlet's catches and Ophelia's medley of shredded ballads belie the poisoned music and society of Elsinore. They speak of lost innocence and hope—a desolation of the "world elsewhere"—which Shakespeare himself may have felt at this juncture of his career. The songs of *As You Like It*, with their festive flavor and folk elements distilled with artifice, cast a waning vision of that idyllic world. I shall begin this discussion by considering Snyder's account of the "world elsewhere," by adumbrating the functions of songs in *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, and by briefly defining comic and tragic song. I shall then treat some of the music of Arden and Elsinore.

I

Snyder found in Coriolanus's defiant address to the Roman mob— "There is a world elsewhere" (3.3.135)—a fitting legend to her study of comic ingredients in Shakespearean tragedy. In her first chapter, "A World Elsewhere," she describes the conventions of Elizabethan comedy (e.g., topsy-turvy courtships resolved in marriages, elastic time, role-playing and disguise, wordplay, the victory of the eiron over "humor" characters, and the use of magic) as embodying a joyful "rejection of singleness" amid a world of possibility.[7] This motley, variform world of the comedy resists confinement to a single perspective, identity, relationship, or social setting: its lovers, lost in bewildering action, often embrace new identities before they are united in marriage—a symbol of social concord and the full life. Thus, Snyder judges the comic mode in general, and Shakespeare's earlier comedy in particular, as an optimistic social vehicle, which abounds in delicious possibilities and urges its audience from extreme dogmatism, legalism, and other pernicious singularities.

Although Snyder largely reiterates what Northrop Frye, Madeleine Doran, and others have said about comic conventions, she also sees in comedy's refusals of singleness and finitude a foil to the fatal patterns of tragedy. Furthermore, she argues that Shakespeare used comedy in structuring his tragedies as such a foil— "a world elsewhere" for which the time-and-place bound hero dies struggling. Hamlet acts the parts of antic and eiron, duping and mocking the comic butts of the play—Polonius, Osric, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern—but falls victim to a deadly trick, and surrenders the throne to his alazon rival, Fortinbras. In analyzing the structures of tragedies, Snyder speaks the argot of comedy, using the language of wish and possibility to discuss limitation and fate.

Reluctant to endorse too simplistic a view of the interplay of comedy and tragedy, however, Snyder qualifies her formulation by observing that the world of comedy is not "completely elsewhere." She explains.

> Comedy's force is so centrifugal that in its welter of possibilities the potential fragmentation of all form and meaning is never far off. Chaos is held in check only by comedy's arbitrary natural law, and perhaps those magicians and other manipulators were felt to be necessary as visible reassurance that things would finally not fall apart, that the center would hold.[8]

The multiplication of forms and meanings may lend hope or despair: it may promise new opportunity or multiple losses, a needed change or staring confusion. Hamlet, according to Snyder, proves himself superior to the comic butts of the play through comic agencies (i.e., role-playing, gulling, puns, and parody), only to find that his wit, like his scruples, makes him less fit to govern than the alazon. Similarly, she finds in the banter and gallows humor of the gravediggers in 5.1 the most stringent challenge to Hamlet's heroism—a comedy that levels all possible distinctions between kings and clowns and threatens the prince with a kind of nihilism. Hence, within the pale of tragedy, and especially in *Hamlet,* comic structures illustrate both the hero's failing struggle for "a world elsewhere" and the moral upset he encounters in the limited world here and now.

Although Snyder lists many of the stage conventions of comedy that Shakespeare converted to matter for tragedy, she curiously omits the comic song from her catalogue, and neglects the ironic uses of ballads and comic songs in *Hamlet.* These songs and snatches not only elaborate Hamlet's antic manner, Ophelia's madness, and the gravediggers' wry gallows humor; they also posit a "world elsewhere" unravelled, rent, and chaotically strewn in the tatters of balladry. While comic songs often abound in merriment and revelry, embellish common rites and social events, or at least offer the consolation of feelings fully expressed, the pattern of tragedy cuts and mangles the songs of Ophelia, Hamlet, and the gravediggers. In the out-of-joint time of the play, music sounds out of tune: Ophelia, at once mermaid-like, cannot bear the weight of events, and is "Pull'd . . . from her melodious lay / To muddy death" (4.7.183).[9] Because, as the casuistical priest says, "We should profane the service of the dead, / To sing a requiem" (5.1.236-237), Ophelia's only funeral music consists of a passing bell and the Queen's pastoral elegy—a lament about the choked song of an innocent. Likewise, Hamlet stares at the faceless and repulsive skull of Yorick and asks, "Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs . . . ?" (5.1.189-190).

Shakespeare's songs in *As You Like It* call forth as clearly as any of the songs in the comedies the "world elsewhere" of *Hamlet*. In the green world of Arden, a good Duke and his merry men find refuge from a despotic usurper; brother is united miraculously to brother; lovers indulge in fantasies behind shepherds' weeds and ludicrous love poems; the heroine shifts in and out of her sexually ambivalent disguise, tutoring and testing her lover; and tuneful songs fill the air. The five vocal pieces of the play begin with a misanthropic Robin Hood song and progress to a ceremonial masque air, charting the plot and the characters' maturing desires to join in a new, more benevolent courtly society. Ophelia also sings of Arden, "For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy" (4.5.187). This ballad snatch with its bawdy pun, however, like her St. Valentine's ballad, is not the starting point of regeneration, but the document of madness. In her balladry, Ophelia unwittingly plays the fool more effectively than had Hamlet earlier, when he sang a few snatches of song. Ultimately, it is a sexton clown who sings most caustically—a butchered lyric about the death of love—while he digs Ophelia's grave, before showing Hamlet the fool's death's-head. The ballads have associations with the childhoods of Ophelia and Hamlet and with the court fool's ballad medley, but they offer no such hope as the music of Arden: the comic song turns black.

Of course, Arden in *As You Like It* is not Eden, nor is the singer Amiens leader of the angelic choir. Beginning in the sadness of exile, the songs mellow with their harmonies the discord among lovers, families, and courts. The vocal lyrics contain some bitter and many winsome notes: the preference for "winter and rough weather" to vicious men is balanced by the sun, sweet birds, and sylvan fellowship of "Under the greenwood tree" (2.5.1); the sharp sting of ingratitude and the keen tooth of winter are offset by the holly of Christmas festivals and the "most jolly" forester's life of "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" (2.7.174); and the cuckoldry joke of "What shall he have that kill'd the deer?" (4.2.10) is blithely dismissed by the sweet spring music of "It was a lover, and his lass" (5.3.16) and by Hymen's happy blessing, "Wedding is great Juno's crown" (5.5.141). The melancholic Jacques and the clown Touchstone both question the truth of this contrived music, introducing further dissonance, but a shimmering melody lingers. Upon counseling Orlando to escape from the cruel Duke Frederick's country, Le Beau wishes: "Hereafter, in a better world than this, / I shall desire more love and knowledge of you" (1.2.284-285). Le Beau does not mean Arden, the indefinite pastoral landscape between deep woods and waste, but a better future world. Arden offers a portal—a state of grace, hope, or growth—to that new world. Helen Gardner calls it "a place of discovery"[10]; William Slights refers to it as "the land of pure, innocent ego, freed of all constrictive parentage, however, elevated"[11]; Alice-Lyle Scoufos says it is a "Paradiso Terrestre" where love is tested.[12] In any case, the location is one of holiday excursion or transition, but no resting place. The songs of the comedy sound a way through Arden to the lost travellers.

Having sketched out some of the different uses of song in *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, I should pause briefly to focus my bleary phrase "comic song," before treating individual songs in the plays. I have suggested that the songs of *Hamlet* have some roots in the conventions of comic drama. Is this so? In his three-volume study, *Shakespeare's Use of Music*, John Long distinguishes three categories of lyrics frequently sung on the Elizabethan stage: folk songs (folk ballads, three-part harmonies, or rounds, usually with crude rhythms and melodies), street songs (broadside ballads set to traditional tunes), and "ayres" or art songs.[13] Because airs required specially composed scores, instrumental accompaniment, and a trained singer, and because their very artfulness could detract from the dramatic content of a tragedy, these art songs appear almost exclusively in the comedies and romances. Shakespeare's "It was a lover and his lass" presents a good example: possibly accompanied by lute and bass viol to Thomas Morley's score in his *First Booke of Ayres* (1600), two trained song boys would have alternated verses, singing the refrain in unison.[14] Such musical bravura very seldom fits the strictures of even Elizabethan tragedy. I do not mean, however, to identify comic songs with airs, for Shakespeare's comedies also brim with folk and street songs, scraps of ballads, and rounds. The air, however, may still yield a clue as to how comic and tragic songs differ.

In Elizabethan drama before Shakespeare, song and dance prevailed in comedies following Plautus's models, whereas Senecan tragedies excelled in declamatory speeches, often leaving choral passages to be spoken. Playwrights sometimes interlarded their comedies thickly with musical divertissements and concluded with a jig, which became a regular afterpiece by the 1590s. Quite early, Richard Edwards's homespun tragicomedy *Damon and Pithias* (1664) used songs to intensify dramatic climaxes, but, as John Stevens observes, "it was some years before the lesson could be put into practice."[15] The early affinity between song and comedy, and the distinctive use of highly-wrought art song in comedies imply that Elizabethans found vocal music for its own sake a pleasing and natural part of the *euphoria*--the sense of social and personal well-being—of comedy. Thomas Nashe's rollicking *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592) exemplifies as well as any Elizabethan comedy this love for song and spectacle, mingling harvest and satyrs' dances, a morris complete with hobbyhorse, and other gaiety with a cornucopia of seasonal song. Perhaps the name of the singing lord in *As You Like It*—Amiens (pronounced *àemienz)*--suggests not only the romantic capital of Picardy, but the *ami*-ability and the fellow feeling of comic song. Certainly, Duke Senior remarks negatively about Jacques' sociability when he accuses him of being "compact of jars"—an unmusical soul.

Of the functions of music in the early comedies, Stevens expresses the generally accepted view:

> One cannot without ingenious absurdity argue that [it] . . . is deeply integrated into the dramatic structure of the play. But it is not mere extraneous entertainment.[16]

And of the music of the tragedies, Stevens continues:

> [These works] show more than any other group of plays the intensely dramatic use . . . [Shakespeare] could make of comparatively slender musical resources.[17]

Of course, Shakespeare used songs brilliantly in comedies and romances (e.g., *Twelfth Night, The Tempest)* as well as in the tragedies to enrich atmosphere, reveal character, and reinforce themes. Songs in comedy and tragedy may have both dramatic and pure entertainment value (cf. the bacchanalian song in *Antony and Cleopatra* and the forester's song in *As You Like It);* but the emphasis in tragedy weighs much more heavily on the dramatic content than in comedy.

The distinction between the comic and tragic song bears a close analogy to the different uses of wit in these dramatic forms. Snyder writes:

> Generalizations must be tentative here, but I think one can draw a broad distinction between tragic wordplay, where the crucial element is the *word*, and comic wordplay, where it is the *play*.[18]

Just as a tour de force à la Touchstone depends much less on context than Hamlet's stabbing puns, so the songs of *As You Like It* might be better enjoyed apart from their context than songs detached from *Hamlet*. The songs in *As You Like It* do contribute to the meaning of the play, but in part through their embellishment of ceremonies and spectacles, through their luxuriance in lyrical sadness and piping merriness, through their gracious indulgence in the euphoria of comedy. Qualities of the songs in *Hamlet* ally them with comic songs: the gravedigger sings irreverently in grim jest; Hamlet mocks Polonius and Claudius with ballad snatches; and Ophelia madly sings a sort of antic's ballad medley. In one sense, the songs are gratuitous, but hardly gracious. W.H. Auden said of Ophelia's songs that they "are to the highest degree not called-for. We are meant to be horrified both by what she sings and by the fact that she sings at all."[19]

II

John Long and others have noted that the songs of *As You Like It* occur in short framed scenes and contribute little to the plot.[20] Shakespeare might have interpolated them after having written the bulk of the play, but they are by no means superfluous. The first four, in part, serve some esoteric staging purposes and mark elapsing time: the first, during preparation of a forest banquet; the second, as entertainment at the banquet; the third, filling the interval of Orlando's final test; and the fourth, awaiting the wedding. Sung by minor characters, these vocal lyrics serve most importantly not to further plot and characterization, but to establish atmosphere and comment on dramatic action, to underscore central themes, and to provide ample musical pleasure.

The first four songs share traditional folk qualities. The lyrics as well as the simple melody of "Under the greenwood tree" (sung a *cappella*, the first stanza by Amiens, and the second by all the foresters) recall such ballads as "Robin Hood and the Monk" and "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale": "As Robin Hood in the forest stood, / All under the green-wood tree."[21] As an artistic imitation of folk music, with a more complicated rhythm and lute accompaniment, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" marks increasing artifice in the songs; "What shall he have" joins many voices in a round, accompanied by a lute, and sung during a lively dance; "It was a lover and his lass" represents, as I have said, a virtuoso rustic air. All of the songs refer to some dance or feast time, preparing for the final, most ritualized ceremony of the comedy—Hymen's song and the wedding dance. The three loveliest of the songs, "Under the greenwood tree," "Blow, blow," and "It was a lover" sound the way through Arden, by accenting important oppositions in the play between cynicism and naive trust, between human treachery and natural consolations, and between the beauty and brevity of youthful love.

Departing from Lodge's *Rosalynde*, which situated Rosader's first sonnet and Rosalynde's madrigal in the evil Duke's court, Shakespeare reserves all his songs for Arden. Amiens sings the first in the short banquet-spreading scene of 2.5, between Rosalind and Celia's safe arrival at Corin's pasture and Orlando's desperate scavenging in the forest. Soon after Corin's humble greeting to Celia and Rosalind, Amiens' song; strikes an inviting refrain

"Come hither," which bridges Rosalind's welcome and Orlando's wandering. After the first verse, as the spreading of the banquet begins, Jacques requests another "stanzo," with which all the foresters favor him. When he presents his wise version of the greenwood song, Amiens agrees to sing again, offering a third, generous course in the musical banquet. "Under the greenwood tree / Who loves to lie with me. . . ."

Amiens' song, mingling pastoral and "greenwood" tavern song, extols a simple fellowship of friends alienated from a vicious society. The naive misanthropic strain of the lyric still permits a festive hope: with meagre needs and few fears, all the spurned noble-hearted can unite in woodland camaraderie. The outlaw-musicians will "turn" (i.e., compose and perform) their note to the accompaniment of bird-song (i.e., "Unto the sweet bird's throat," a synecdoche). Thus, they will translate their courtly manners with sprezzatura to an idyllic setting.

"Under the greenwood tree" largely reinforces the themes of Duke Senior's speech (2.1.1-17), which broaches the world of Arden. Free of the "envious court," the exile contends with no flatterers; he feels in even the winter winds good counsel about mortality. The Duke sees "sermons; in stones, and good in every thing" (2.1.17). To this moral of providential design and universal good, Amiens replies: "Happy is your Grace, / That can translate the stubbornness of fortune / Into so quiet and so sweet a style." Thus, the first song offers such an exercise in sweet translation, affecting indifference to the false court and joy for a pastoral refuge. The posture is not, however, as Jacques contends, wholly false: Orlando will soon "come hither," as if led by providence, and be pleased "with what he gets."

Jacques' wry parody reveals his self-indulgent cynicism. "Ducdame," his "invocation to call fools into a circle," pictures the exiled foresters exulting stupidly in a factitious prosperity. This "Ducdame" recalls the *dukedom* usurped by Frederick as well as the Latin *duc ad me*. Jacques ridicules those who accept their banishment ungrudgingly and pretend to be happy, as well as those—even more foolhardy—who have left the court on romantic whim. Woodland friendships are not worth the woodland inconveniences. Thus he affirms Touchstone's sentiments: "Ay, now am I in Arden, the more fool I" (2.4.16).

At the center of the festivities, Jacques also plays the licensed fool, seeing in a weeping deer the court's brutality and in a banquet its illusions of pastoral merriment. Most famously, he sees in human life the farcical acts of seven ages, with their cacophonous music: the "mewling" infant, the "whining schoolboy," the lover "sighing like furnace," the soldier with his "strange oaths," and the old man whose voice "Turn[s] again toward childish treble" and "pipes / and whistles in his sound" (2.7.144-163). If music cannot cure the discord in Jacques' soul, it at least makes his jest less dyspeptic. Just as the appearance of noble Adam at the banquet and the deep empathy of "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" undercut the reductive pessimism of the "Seven Ages" speech in 2.7, so Amiens' trained voice disarms Jacques' greenwood parody. Although the confused speech prefixes in the First Folio render it uncertain whether Jacques or Amiens delivers the third stanza, Seng and Mary Lascelles conclude that Amiens should keep his promise and sing the stanza[22]—either after Jacques has recited it or has handed a manuscript to the singer. Indeed, the comic generosity of the first song lies in the fact that the singer recognizes its happy naiveté and will sing its mocking contrary for his friends' pleasure—as they like it. Sweet music can harmonize discord and absorb even bitter jest.

Amiens' second song, following Orlando's distraught entrance into Arden, sounds a deeper melancholy, as a kind of musical remedy to discordant souls. Catherine Dunn has found throughout Shakespeare traces of the Renaissance notion of the curative power of music.[23] King Richard II says of music: "it have holp mad men to their wits" (5.5.62). As her delirious and ailing father rests in the French camp, Cordelia prays that the gods will "wind up" the "untun'd and jarring senses" of King Lear (4.7.15). Then, to soft music, servants proceed onto the stage, carrying Lear, and a Doctor orders: "Louder the music there!" *Musica instrumentalis*, according to this Renaissance idea, brings the disturbed mind back to its native harmony of *musica humana*, and then into tune with the greater *musica mundana*. The social nature of music also recommends it as a cure for Orlando and the other estranged foresters.

In 2.7, with drawn sword, Orlando interrupts Jacques' babbling apology for the office of fool, and demands the first share of the banquet. The Duke's inquiry about his manners shows the absurdity of such violence in Arden (where hospitality greets all strangers) and, so, accents the paradoxes of the savage court and the gentle country. Having escaped the murderous wrestling holds of Charles, the vengeful Duke Frederick, and his own cruel brother, Orlando has fled into the wilderness. He is alienated, lost, and desperate—clinging ferociously to his last norm, his bond of gratitude to faithful Adam. When he finds unfeigned generosity in another exile, he recalls dispossessed values: "if ever [you have] been where bells have knoll'd to church, / If ever sate at any good man's feast, / If ever from your eyelids wip'd a tear. . ." (2.7.114-116). The sheathing of his sword signals spiritual peace: Orlando begins his reconciliation to society through the empathy of his fellow exiles. While the Duke draws out the stranger's painful story, Amiens sings to the lute a therapeutic song: "Blow, blow, thou winter wind, / Thou art not so unkind. . . ."

Vocally, "Blow, blow" is a piercing work of empathy. The harsh elemental images, the strong rhymes, and the thick repetition of shrill vowels (w*i*nter w*i*nd, k*i*nd; k*ee*n, s*ee*n; fr*ee*ze, fr*ee*ze, sk*y*, n*i*gh) and bass vowels (th*ou*, th*ou*, t*oo*th, r*u*de, ingratit*u*de) express both cutting pain and deep sorrow. Although Orlando's dispute with his brother did not involve a friend's ingratitude, it was another such fundamental betrayal. The lyric's mention of friendship enables all the banished foresters to participate in the grief and poses again the contrast between Frederick's court and Arden. Supported by these new compatriots, offered the festival warmth symbolized by Christmas holly, Orlando can reflect on his true friendship with Adam and enjoy consolation. The refrain of "Then Heigh-ho, the holly! / This life is most jolly" is in no way ironic: it lets out the sighs of catharsis, and gives the hope and comfort of emotional release. The hero's next speech is both lovesick and silly— "Hang there, my verse, in witness of my love" (3.2.1)—and so witnesses also the healing power of Arden's music.

As the love plot of *As You Like It* develops, the music inevitably takes up this new note: the exiles move from outlaw fellowship through romantic love back to their social moorings. Rosalind-Ganymede's deliberate testing of Orlando—warning him of narcissistic ideals of his beloved, of women's vices, and of the fickleness of amour—cements his commitment to her and to the new society in which they will meet. After their mock wedding in 4.1, he must prove himself to her by strictly keeping a tryst—abiding again by a clock and agenda. When he meets ragged Oliver—an image of Despair akin to Spenser's--his natural and social instincts prevail. The green snake of envy glides away from the still body, and the lioness of pride attacks Orlando: by fighting his own spiritual battle, he is able to restore life to his brother, and to bring him into the Duke's care. Oliver's delivery of the bloody handkerchief marks a total conversion, atonement, and reconciliation, restoring natural and social bonds. Rosalind's swoon, nearly revealing her identity, and her child's whimper, "I would I were at home," indicate her shock at the sign of life-and-death commitment. Even in Arden, there comes an end to the "holiday humor."

Condensing his source, Shakespeare hastened the love affair between Oliver and Celia (Saladyne and Alinda in *Rosalynde)*, in order to repeat in miniature Orlando's progress from despair to romantic love. As well as preparing for a recognition scene with multiple marriages, the accelerating time-frame emphasizes the natural and social limitations on love. To use Rosalind's terms, time for the lovers speeds from an amble to a trot "[L]et Time try," she says to Orlando in 4.1.200; "We shall find a time, Audrey, patience," Touchstone promises his "country wench" in 5.1.1: Oliver and Celia have "made a pair of stairs to marriage, which they will climb incontinent," says Rosalind in 5.2.37-39; and "To-morrow is the joyful day, Audrey," trumpets Touchstone in 5.3.1. The pages' song to the courtier-clown and his simple country bride celebrates the evanescent springtime of love: "It was a lover and his lass, / With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino. . . ."

When the pages defend their singing ("we kept time, we lost not our time"), Touchstone retorts, "By my troth, yes; I count it but time lost to hear such a foolish song" (5.3.37-40). With this quizzical repartee, he comments on the *carpe diem* theme of the song. If the day is to be seized, are such ditties musical distractions? Touchstone is bantering about what he loves best—exuberant frivolity and verbal play. The rollicking voices of the song boys, "like two gypsies on a horse," alternating for the verses and joining for refrains, offer such pleasure. *Carpe diem* is to take these delights without inhibition. In the rustic simplicity of the lyric lies its loveliness, but "no great matter." The nonce jingle, "With a hey . . .," and the three-line refrain, "In spring time . . ." occupy sixteen of the twenty-four lines of the song with pure frivolity. G.B. Shaw once caviled over the song with a Touchstonian irony: "Who ever heard a bird sing 'hey ding a ding ding' or anything even remotely resembling it?"[24] The point of the bagatelle is not mimetic birdcall but a joyous dallying with sounds, expressing the jubilant, though brief, frolic of young love.

The subjects of the lyric are long-ago country lovers, strolling and lying between plots of green rye, exchanging rings, singing and dancing to their carol of life's transience: "life was but a flower." Shakespeare replayed the same sweet melancholy of this rustic air in Feste's song in *Twelfth Night*: "Then come kiss me sweet and twenty; /Youth's a stuff will not endure" (2.3.51-52). Love in the pages' song "is crowned with the prime": love holds its crowning pageant in the spring, but the flower-and-leaf coronets of prime soon wither. The recognition of death and social constraints, amid the engrossing play of "It was a lover and his lass" and Rosalind's love games, make *As You Like It*, as Gardner has dubbed it, "Shakespeare's most Mozartian comedy."[25] This song, with its mixture of musical artifice and folk lyrics, illustrates the play's harmonizing of country and court, holiday and working day, life's pleasures and limits. The music of the play works a magic subtler than Rosalind's, evoking a "world elsewhere."

III

Near the scarifying conclusion of *King Lear*, after having been captured along with Cordelia by Edmund's forces, Lear conjures up a defiant illusion:

No, no, no, no! Come let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i'th' cage;
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies . . .

(5.3.8-13)

Having rediscovered love in his madness, Lear imagines a world immured against political intrigue, court clamour, and the vicissitudes of kingship. This fantasy of childhood security, friendship, and joy, this "world elsewhere," is also a world of song. The pathos of Lear's vision lies in its naiveté and mad impossibility in the world of the tragedy. While the alienated characters of *As You Like It* hear in music a fragile hope for social concord, Lear resorts desperately to a fantasy of child song. Similarly, in Webster's *White Devil*, when Cornelia sings and attempts to strew flowers over the body of her murdered son, one onlooker observes: "Alas! her grief / Hath turn'd her child again" (5.4.75-76).[26] Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy could render emotional and mental distress thus, through a character's childlike regression to song. The music of *Hamlet*--not Ophelia's songs exclusively—expresses not only such a case of madness but the moral disturbance of the "out of joint" time of the play.

Unlike Arden, where music consoles and delights and where Jacques alone abjures the final social harmony, Elsinore wrenches out a dissonant music. The sennet flourishes for Claudius echo his royal dignity hollowly, and the cannon salvos and trumpets blast out brazenly. Claudius's balancing of "dole and delight," of "mirth in funeral" and "dirge in marriage" proves him politic, but makes a jarring music: social harmony and moral decorum suffer concussion. In 1.4 Hamlet hears, more acutely than he yet realizes, moral disorder in the riotous music of Claudius. The music of drunken reels, trumpets, and kettle-drums that deafens the conscience of the king certainly makes "a custom / More honor'd in the breach than the observance" (1.4.15-16). Throughout the play references to music take on sinister meanings: Laertes warns Ophelia not to "list [Hamlet's] songs," which he takes to be mercenary assurances of love (1.3.30); Polonius employs Reynaldo to spy on Laertes and to "let him ply his music" (2.1.70); Ophelia describes herself in the nunnery scene as "most deject and wretched, / That suck'd the honey of his music vows" (3.1.155-156), and the mind of antic Hamlet as "sweet bells jangled out of time, and harsh" (3.1.158); the prince advises Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that, "though you fret me, yet you cannot play upon me"

(3.2.371-372); and he lauds those who "are not a pipe for Fortune's finger / To sound what stop she please" (3.2.70-71). Political treachery, disloyalty, and sexual mistrust change the meaning of music in Elsinore, from the playful songs of Hamlet's childhood to a means for vicious indulgence and manipulation—a poison entering the porches of an ear.

As tragic hero, though often with the mask of an antic, Hamlet seeks to redress this perversion of music. In the graveyard scene, he remarks on the sexton's ill-timed song: "Has this fellow no feeling of his business? 'a sings in grave-making" (5.1.65-66). Although he scorns the clowns' comic irreverence for the dead, he plays antic again himself as he contemplates the skull of Yorick, puns, and gives a mocking order. With cutting wit, Hamlet revives the spirit of the jester, jeering at the false "painting" that will be exposed by death. He sings or recites snatches of ballads and songs, perhaps once learned from the antic routine of his boyhood friend Yorick: a scriptural ballad, "Jephthah Judge of Israel" (2.2.403 ff.); a festive ballad, "For O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot!" (3.2.135 ff.); a song verse, "Why, let the strooken deer go weep" (3.2.271 ff.); and a popular song about Damon and Pythias (3.2.281 ff.). The first snatch he sings to Polonius as the travelling tragedians arrive; the second he recites to Ophelia before the "Mousetrap" as the hobbyhorse's epitaph, censuring Gertrude's brief mourning for King Hamlet; and the third and fourth he chants, recites, or sings to Horatio, breaking forth in song at the capture of the king's conscience.

In his "antic disposition," Hamlet plays licensed fool deftly, using brutal puns, chop-logic, and bawdy travesty. When Polonius enters with an account of the players, the prince mocks both the counselor's tardiness in relaying news and rashness in manipulating his daughter. Hamlet adapts the "pious chanson," a popular ballad, into a stabbing riddle. In his rash persuasion of Ophelia to return Hamlet's letters and refuse him further interviews, Polonius has acted out of cynicism and political interest in his daughter's behavior. To Hamlet, the story of Jephthah fits well this father, who has denounced true vows of love as false "brokers" of "unholy suits." While the prince does not know Polonius's precise instructions to Ophelia, he must suspect heavy parental interference—the sacrifice of a virgin to the venal demands of a doddering politician: "O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou! (2.2.403-20). In his antic routine, Hamlet denies Polonius's real love for Ophelia on a quibble, "that follows not" referring both to logical consequence and to the next lines in the ballad. He leaves the suspicious father to construe the rest of the "first row" or stanza, and presumably the rest of the story, for himself.

The identification of Ophelia with Jephthah's daughter—piously obedient to her father's rash vow—satirizes both father and daughter. This beautiful virgin of the Biblical story and the ballad (later printed in the Roxburghe and Shirburn collections), who with dance and music greets her father, reminds Hamlet of the Ophelia he once thought to marry. The daughter of "Jepha Judge of Israell" crosses the threshold, playing the wedding instruments of tabor and pipe (an embellishment on the Biblical text), "And notes full high, / for joy that he was so nye, so nye," perhaps suggesting to Hamlet an incipient marriage.[27] When the maiden of the ballad learns of her father's vow, she submits to the sacrifice, retreating to a wilderness "'to bewaile my Virginity'" with "'some moe / like maides with me'" before her death.[28] The ballad darkly foreshadows the nunnery scene, Ophelia's mad laments for her virginity, and her death. The same misguided piety of Jephthah's daughter has, to Hamlet's mind, led Ophelia to repel offers tending toward marriage, and to victimize herself for her father's sake. In 2.2 the prince labels Polonius a fishmonger (or bawd) and warns him to keep Ophelia out of the sun lest she conceive i.e., engender a child. In the nunnery scene, he maintains this assurance of Ophelia's betrayal of him, and displaces his anger toward his mother upon her with brutal misogyny and cynicism.

In his mad song and jest, Hamlet tragically fails to bring new harmony to Elsinore, for the king has "nothing with" a footling answer (3.2.96), except a vague threat; Polonius misconstrues the madness; and the counselor's daughter grieves at it. There is more than a feigned madness in Hamlet's "antic disposition": his snatches of song, riddles, and puns thwart communication and defer needed action. Though his foolery may recall the happier court of King Hamlet and Yorick, it only makes the present court more chaotic—distressing Ophelia, urging Polonius to scheme and Claudius to take desperate action. The joyous mocking of the king in "Why, let the strooken deer go weep" and "For thou dost know, O Damon dear" (3.2.271-285), and the call for music after the play belie the fatal turn of the action: Hamlet determines to take revenge, and Claudius decides not to let his nephew's "madness range," i.e., to eliminate Hamlet. In contrast with the sustained songs of love, sweet sadness, and social concord in comedy, this short bar of elated music sets off the isolation of the tragic hero. Hamlet requests music at the outcome of the "comedy" (3.2.293) in order to celebrate his antic work for a brief moment with his friend, before setting himself to its gnarled and bloody consequences.

Hamlet's high-spirited Damon song, with its jeering replacement of an "ass" with a "pajock," and his boasts to Horatio about his acting savor of boyhood banter and recall the court of King Hamlet and Yorick. The Jove of the Damon lyric is the prince's idealization of his father, the same godlike being (Jove, Hyperion, Mars, Mercury) he later describes to his mother—the epitome of royal majesty, martial valor, and courtesy. Likewise, he idealizes his father's court as a "world elsewhere," a Golden Age of Denmark—the flowery garden of "The Murther of Gonzago" before the poisoner enters. His catches and raillery sometimes allude directly to this bygone world, but more often they mock the present court, showing the decay of innocent joy as well as of nobility at Elsinore. Later in 3.2, when Polonius summons the prince to his mother's closet, Hamlet stalls, fancying in the tapestry a cloud—first like a camel, then like a weasel, and then like a whale. Such capricious stunts not only prove Polonius a dupe and Hamlet the trickster, but also suggest a child's fantasies of elsewhere. His "antic" humor is also an antique humor, for he yearns for a fancied past, and he speaks the language of foolery and child's games. Hamlet calls Osric a waterfly and a parroting chough, Claudius a "king of shreds and patches," Gertrude a girl beaten at "hoodmanblind," Rosencrantz and Guildenstern apple bits in an ape's jaw, and his father, though the gibe also cuts at the queen, a hobbyhorse who "is forgot."

More pointedly than Hamlet's catches, Ophelia's mad songs contrast youthful hopes with the vicious betrayals of Elsinore. As she is truly mad, her songs intone an aweful inspiration. She enters twice in 4.5, sings scraps from five ballads in her antic medley (as Long noted) and plays the fool more effectively than Hamlet could, moving her "hearers to collection" (4.5.9). Long observes that the Walsingham song reminds the Queen of dead King Hamlet, that the Valentine's Day ballad may suggest to Claudius his dishonesty with Gertrude, and that "They bore him barefac'd . . ." and "And will 'a not come again?" certainly dispose Laertes to revenge.[29] Bereft of her father and her lover, Ophelia, in distraction, returns to childhood songs to express her anguish at betrayal and death. These themes of her songs concern not only Hamlet's murder of Polonius—as the Gentleman, Gertrude, Claudius, and Laertes imagine—but the prince's betrayal of her love and sexual identity. Like Jephthah's daughter, Ophelia laments her virginity before her self-sacrifice. The catch from a Robin Hood ballad, "And bonny sweet Robin is all my joy" (4.5.187), conceals a phallic pun, hinting at fancies of Arden and her lost hopes for love. Laertes exclaims more incisively than he realizes, "Thought and afflictions, passions, hell itself / She turns to favor and prettiness" (4.5.188-189). Much of the pathos of Ophelia's madness comes in her ingenuous borrowing of songs to express a devastating assault on innocence: by his murder of her father, Hamlet has played false to her, proving his own misanthropic rant and her family's cynical caveats true. Thus, she turns her hell—her victimization in loving both her father and the prince—into the favor of her songs.

As mad laments (ostensibly for her father), each of Ophelia's songs also reflects her love for Hamlet and the painful betrayal she has felt in her father's murder. Coleridge found in her songs the "conjunction . . . of these two thoughts that had never subsisted in disjunction, the love for Hamlet and her filial love" with the warnings of her father and brother.[30] Her first song, "How should I your true-love know . . .?" derives from a lost Walsingham ballad, in which a lover seeks her beloved, separated from her on the way to the shrine, and hears from another pilgrim of his death. The distinguishing of a "true-love" from others suggests that on her pilgrimage of love devout Ophelia has suffered a desertion and a death of truth—or of loyalty. Seng has found an analogue for the ballad in the song, "As yee came from the holy Land / of walsingham."[31] In this ballad, an abandoned lover complains: "loue is like a carlesse child / & fforgets promise past / he is blind he is deaffe when he list / & in faith neuer ffast."[32] As the Valentine's day ballad proves, this thought of cruel infidelity rankles in Ophelia's mind: Hamlet's slaying of her father represents a two-fold death (i.e., of her father and of *true*-love)—affirming her father's cynical warning about lovers. In the first song, the report, "He is dead and gone, lady, / He is dead and gone" (4.5.29-30) dashes the hope of finding her beloved with "cockle hat and staff, / And his sandal shoon"—an image of bygone piety—implying the shock of both her father's *death* and the prince's *going*.

Similarly, J.J.M. Tobin points out that the iterative phrase in Ophelia's last song suggests this double loss:[33]

> "His beard was as white as snow,
> All flaxen was his pole,
> He is gone, he is gone,
> And we cast away moan,
> God 'a' mercy on his soul!"
>
> (4.5.195-199)

Tobin notes that in the story of Cupid and Psyche in Adlington's translation of *The Golden Asse,* the goddess describes her lover falsely as a young man "with a *flaxen* beard."[34] Whether or not Shakespeare meant any allusion to this fairy tale, the lines "He is gone," and "He will never come again" clearly fit Hamlet's banishment, and "For bonny sweet Robin" recalls his bawdy words to Ophelia in 3.1 and 3.2. Likewise, in her third song, the conflation of a nonsense refrain, "Hey non nonny," and a mournful ballad, "They bore him barefac'd on the bier" (4.5.165-166), contrasts her naive hopes—the stuff of comic song—with a blighting reality.

Ophelia reveals most about the causes for her madness in the St. Valentine's day ballad. She answers the king's remark that "Conceit upon her father" (4.5.45) brings her to madness with a bit of tavern ribaldry about a rake's betrayal of a maiden. Mad singers often indulged in bawdry in Elizabethan drama, but Ophelia's unwitting indecency reveals a deep injury, harking back to Hamlet's crudeness to her in the nunnery scene: "We are arrant knaves, believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunn'ry" (3.1.128-129). The rake's specious reasoning and possibly heartless pun, "by yonder sun" (i.e., an unwanted son), partake of the same vicious misogyny as Hamlet's taunt, "marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them" with its jokes on bastardy and cuckoldry (3.1.137-139). The inquisitive maiden of Ophelia's song cherishes naive hopes of romance, but only peeks into the window of love and is trapped and betrayed:

> To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
>   All in the morning betime,
> And I a maid at your window,
>   To be your Valentine.

Ophelia broaches the song by identifying with the maiden ("And I a maid"), then shifts to a narrative third-person perspective ("Let in the maid"), and to choric comment ("Young men will do't"), as she relives her own loss of innocence. The structure of the song implies that the maiden cannot understand the old rougish trick until she is hurt by it. Although Ophelia has not lost her chastity to Hamlet, she has found out cruelty behind the mask of courtly gentleness. Her poignant pun on "oath" (i.e., a curse or a lover's vow), and the stretching of her own promise by using mitigated oaths ("By Gis" and "By Cock," meaning "by Jesus" and "by God") indicate her bitter experience with Hamlet's "music vows." In the song, the rake's dissembling—putting on his clothes before opening the door—and his recklessness—"tumbling" the maid—image a brutal betrayal. In the mouth of such a victim, the bawdy song amounts to an ugly travesty of the comic hopes of St. Valentine's day.

Singing "old lauds" until she drowns, in a flight from the tragic complications of the play, Ophelia regresses completely to childhood fancies, to her own "world elsewhere." She tells her brother to sing, "A-down, a-down," a catch remembered from matrons at their spinning wheels; and she herself sings the old comic refrain, "Hey non nonny," and the bawdy lyrics probably heard long ago from some rake or ballad-monger. Her knitting of garlands from willow branches and wild flowers symbolizes her disappointment in love, but also recalls the flower-gathering and May games of young girls. C.R. Baskervill provides a helpful gloss: "At marriages, and perhaps in seasonal games, it was the custom for unsuccessful lovers to wear the willow garland and sing of their woe."[35] Gertrude's description of Ophelia as a mermaid in the brook, "As one incapable of her own distress / Or like a creature native and indued / Unto that element" (4.7.178-180), reflects her winsome childishness in death—and perhaps an infantile dream of love and oceanic peace. In any case, she cannot sing long in her fancy of elsewhere until the weight of tragedy impels "the poor wretch from her melodious lay / To muddy death" (4.7.182-183).

If Snyder's analysis of the graveyard scene (that it "uses comedy . . . as an element within the tragic vision rather than as a contrasting ethos"[36]) distinguishes it from other scenes in the play, this comi-tragical blending may also distinguish the gravedigger's song from other songs. In effect, the singer's butchering of Lord Vaux's "The aged lover renounceth love" does not juxtapose comic possibility with tragic fact, but unleashes the chaotic force of comedy as a challenge to tragic heroism. Through the construction of the scene, moving from legal parody and gallows riddles to an obscenely inappropriate song, to an antic meditation *de contemptu mundi*, and to Ophelia's "maimed rites," Shakespeare mixes genres in order to show the moral upset of Elsinore. In this chaotic world, where age withers love, and where death levels all pretensions, the tragic hero asserts his individuality against absurdity. The sexton's song, syncopated by grunts and shovels-full of exhumed remains, casts Hamlet in the role of macabre antic to question the hopes of all songs. During the grave making, he notes, "That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once" (5.1.75-76); and later he reminisces of Yorick's playful songs. The sardonic weight of the entire scene drags Hamlet down into Ophelia's grave, as a fool to "my lady's chamber," where he frenetically reaffirms the heroism and love denied by the gravedigger's song.

The sexton's first stanza, sung in the making of Ophelia's grave, prompts Hamlet to put on the motley and mock the churl's irreverence, the court's putrefaction, and all human pretense to greatness. Attending to the tossed-up skulls and bones rather than to the gravedigger's continuing lyrics, the prince mocks Lord Such-a-one and Lady Worm, and all politicians, courtiers, and lawyers. "Here's fine revolution, and we had the trick to see 't" (5.1.90-91), he says, equating the turning over of graves with the toppling of governments and of all moral order. As the clown sings about how time vitiates love and supports his profession, Hamlet confronts the absurdity of all human endeavor against death. The song and antic meditation intersect in the theme of "meetness": "In youth when I did love, did love. . ." (5.1.61-74). While the sexton may make "meet," i.e. well-proportioned graves, his botching of Lord Vaux's poem into a song of his trade is far from being "meet," fitting or proper. His adding of syllables in the manner of comic balladry, "did love, did love" and "a spade, a spade," and his blundering with the song's meter are certainly not meet. Most of all, his quibble with "meet"— "For such a guest is *meat*"—is revoltingly improper at the grave of a maiden and in the presence of her lover.

Of course, neither the prince nor the gravedigger entirely realizes the situation, and each commits some unwitting indignities. Hamlet's antic order to Yorick's skull, "Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come" (5.1.192-194), intends the pun on "favor" (preferment, death's face) as a fleer at Gertrude, but also makes a vile allusion to Ophelia's chamber—her grave. Similarly, the clown cannot realize the indecency at this moment of his song about the renouncing of love: he does not know Ophelia has died in part from a lover's betrayal and that the lover attests his fidelity. When the prince stumbles upon Ophelia's "maimed rites," where a casuistical cleric takes up again the subject of meetness, he realizes that he cannot escape the mockery of this disturbed world. His mad struggle with Laertes in the grave and his declaration of love for Ophelia make a frantic and absurd defense of heroism and individuality. Against the gallows humor of the sexton as against the maudlin histrionics of Laertes, Hamlet seeks to affirm the ideals of love and honor he learned in his boyhood from his father and from Yorick.

Although the gravedigger's song in 5.1 mocks the tragic hero's values, the prince's reminiscence of Yorick's songs offers a vision of a "world elsewhere," where love does not die harum-scarum, and where social order can emerge from anarchy. Hamlet employs the medieval theme of *ubi sunt*-- "Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs . . .?"—less to moralize on the vanity of earthly power and pomp, than to elegize the loss of comic possibility with the buffeting and isolation of individuals in the tragic world. Both Ophelia and he feel this loss poignantly, as they are denied the comic finale oi marriage, the personal concord of *musica humana*, and the embracing harmony of *musica mundana*. Instead, they suffer the distorted music of Elsinore and reply with their tatters of song—the vestiges of their childhood ideals and hopes.

IV

In writing about *As You Like It*, Theresa Coletti argues that Shakespeare's comedy often urges a subtle *carpe diem:*

> Comedy exploits adaptability; it tests a character's willingness to grasp the proper moment and fashion it to his own end. . . . This *carpe diem* attitude toward living, which depends on the coincidence of situation and desire, posits a sense of time that locates value in the particular moment. Time's effect, then, is not cumulative but instantaneous; it is not the

fulfillment of destiny but life lived "as you like it."[37]

Coletti finds in comedy a sense of time pregnant with possibility and an imperative for enjoying the present moment. She interprets "It was a lover and his lass" in *As You Like It* as an epitome of the successful grasping of a moment and the realization of "a new order of living and being."[38] Thus, Shakespeare encapsulates the joy of the present moment in a song as an emblem of the "world elsewhere." That opportunities may be missed and that the present time cannot endure the *carpe diem* theme is made explicit, but this moment holds in itself an idyllic perfection. The irrevocable loss of the moment and the denial of any more such moments transform the *carpe diem* of comedy into the *ubi sunt* of tragedy.

The songs of *Hamlet* evoke an idyll no longer possible at Elsinore: the hero cannot grasp the proper occasion, and the out-of-joint time leads the whole cast to death. The shredding and jumbling of songs image not only moral disorder, but the truculent assault of time upon youthful hopes. While Arden allowed time for songs of consolation and joy, Elsinore mangles such songs. Of course, Shakespeare offered other versions of the "world elsewhere"—the forest of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the Belmont of *The Merchant of Venice*, the magical woods of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the island of *The Tempest*--but the idyll of *As You Like It* comes as close to Hamlet and Ophelia's dreams as that of any of the other plays. Arden permits a refuge from a vicious court for the noble, a feast for the hungry, kindness for the distressed, and fulfillment for the lovesick. There Rosalind can protect herself against betrayal with a disguise, brothers can be reconciled, and an evil duke can repent—even as Hamlet cannot hide behind the mask of madness, nor Ophelia escape betrayal, nor Claudius repent. The sheer pastoral artifice of *As You Like It* distinguishes the play as a courtly fancy, embellished with song and fairy tale and masque. Shakespeare soon proceeded from that beautiful outpost, with its music in his ears, to Elsinore. In *Hamlet*, and later in *Othello* and *King Lear*, the poet accomplished a melding that he had first conceived in the episode of Peter and the musicians in *Romeo and Juliet*. He juxtaposed comic and tragic song— "solemn hymns" and "sullen dirges"—and then fused them (e.g., in Iago's clamorous tavern songs, and the Fool's pungent medley on the heath), turning the "centrifugal force" of comedy into the moral and emotional crises of tragedy. Such art worked a very sobering alchemy.[39]

NOTES

1. Barbara Bono, "Mixed Gender, Mixed Genre in *As You Like It*," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara K. Lewalski, Harvard English Studies 14 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), p. 204.

2. Susan Snyder, *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), p. 93.

3. Joseph T. McCullen, Jr., "The Functions of Songs Aroused by Madness in Elizabethan Drama," in *A Tribute to George Coffin Taylor, Studies and Essays, Chiefly Elizabethan, by His Students and Friends*, ed. Arnold Williams, (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1952), p. 191; for a conspectus of criticism on the songs of *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*, see: W.H. Auden, "Music in Shakespeare: Its Dramatic Use in His Plays," *Encounter* 9, No. 6 (1957), 31-44; Richard Knowles, ed., *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: As You Like It* (New York: MLA, 1977); John Long, *A Study of the Music in the Original Production of Seven Comedies*, Vol. I of *Shakespeare's Use of Music* (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1955); Long, *The Histories and the Tragedies*, Vol. III of *Shakespeare's Use of Music* (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1971); Peter Seng, *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare: A Critical History* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967); F.W. Stemfeld, *Music in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

4. Long (n. 3 above), III, 113.

5. Stemfeld (n. 3 above), pp. 8, 57.

6. Stemfeld (n. 3 above), p. 65.

7. Snyder (n. 2 above), p. 51.

8. Snyder (n. 2 above), p. 55.

9. William Shakespeare, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 1177; all citations of Shakespeare, unless otherwise stated, are to this text. Editorial brackets have been silently removed to distinguish them from my own.

10. Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," in *More Talking of Shakespeare*, ed. John Garrett (London: Longmans, 1959), p. 27.

11. William Slights, "Nature's Originals: Value in Shakespearean Pastoral," *Shakespeare Survey* 37 (1984), 71.

12. Alice-Lyle Scoufos, "The *Paradiso Terrestre* and the Testing of Love in *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 14 (1981), 215.

13. Long (n. 3 above), I, 1-4.

14. Long (n. 3 above), I, 155; Seng (n. 3 above), *The Vocal Songs*, p. 89 postulates that Morley's air, which includes lute and bass viol parts, "is probably the original music for this song."

Long (I,155) notes that "there is no evidence in the Folio text that instruments were used" with the song.

15. John Stevens, "Shakespeare and the Music of the Elizabethan Stage: An Introductory Essay," in *Shakespeare in Music*, ed. Phyllis Hartnoll (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 8.

16. Stevens (n. 15 above), p. 21.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

18. Snyder (n. 2 above), p. 33.

19. Auden (n. 3 above), p. 42.

20. Long (n. 3 above), I, 140.

21. "Robin Hood and Allen a Dale," Vol. III of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. Francis James Child (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1962), p. 173.

22. Peter Seng, "Music in Shakespeare," *Encounter*, 10 (Mar. 1958), 68; Lascelles, "Shakespeare's Pastoral Comedy," in *More Talking of Shakespeare*, p. 80; Seng and Lascelles quoted in Knowles, p. 105 (n. 3 above).

23. Catherine Dunn, "The Function of Music in Shakespeare's Romances," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20 (1969), 391-405.

24. G. Bernard Shaw, "On Cutting Shakespear," *The Fortnightly Review*, 112, Old Series (1919), 216.

25. Gardner (n. 10 above), p. 18.

26. John Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 163.

27. "When Jepha Judge of Israell," in *The Shirburn Ballads, 1585-1616*, ed. Andrew Clark (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), p. 175.

28. "When Jepha Judge of Israell," *Ibid.*, p. 176.

29. Long (n. 3 above), III, 114-115.

30. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. Thomas M. Raysor (London: J.M. Dent, 1960), I, 30-31.

31. "As yee came fr: the Holye," in Vol. III of *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript. Ballads and Romances*, ed. John Hales (London, 1867-1868), pp. 471 ff.; quoted in Seng, *The Vocal Songs*, p. 137 (n. 22 above).

32. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

33. J.J.M. Tobin, "The Unique 'Flaxen' in Ophelia's Mad Song," *Hamlet Studies*, 3, No. 2 (Winter 1981), 111.

35. Charles Read Baskervill, *The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1929), p. 21.

36. Snyder (n. 2 above), p. 117.

37. Theresa Coletti, "Music and the Tempest," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: Essays in the Honour of Charles Crow*, ed. Richard C. Tobias and Paul G. Zolbrod (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1974), p. 190.

38. Coletti (n. 37 above), p. 188.

39. Although I have not included a citation in his behalf, my greatest debt by far in the conception and development of this paper is to Professor Charles Forker, Indiana University. He gave impetus to my research through a seminar on the interplay of lyric and dramatic modes in Shakespeare; and, with care and generosity, he helped me revise and edit this essay for publication.

Hamlet's Ghost and the Dramatic Function of Shakespeare's Ambiguous "Apparitions"

PETER J. SORENSEN

Bernardo : 'Tis here!
Horatio : 'Tis here!
Marcellus : 'Tis gone!

(*Hamlet* 1.1.141-42.)

One of the great difficulties in interpreting *Hamlet* is that so much hinges on the activities, early on, of the elder Hamlet's ghost. Debate still rages over what the ghost should be, what Shakespeare intended, and what Shakespeare's audience might have perceived. Roland Frye points out that the ghost raises doubts that could be raised by "no other device."[1] Frye's solution to this knotty problem of interpretation is to place the ghost scene in the cultural perspective of the early seventeenth century; he offers us four possible contexts for interpreting the ghost: (1) a device, that is, a common feature of stage productions; (2) a wraith actually returning from the dead (as in Greek tradition); (3) possibly a ghost, but more likely a disguised devil (the Protestant tradition); or (4) possibly a devil, but perhaps a soul from purgatory (the Catholic tradition). Frye's ultimate conclusion is, as one might expect, that the ambiguity of Hamlet's ghost is both necessary and desirable, and that if the ghost were too clean-cut, Hamlet's task would have been far too easy to be dramatically significant (i.e., we would have nothing more than a revenger's play, a la Kyd). In this essay I propose that there is another, equally valid way of attempting, at least, to understand the ambiguity in Hamlet's ghost, and that is to examine how Shakespeare used apparitions in other plays.

There are several ways to organize such an examination. I shall first examine the plays in question, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *Cymbeline*, and *Henry VIII*, in the chronological order of their creation, to see if there is any sense either of continuity or of evolution in Shakespeare's conception of the dramatic function of ghosts in his works. From this examination I shall attempt to draw some conclusions about Shakespeare's ghosts in general, and about Hamlet's ghost in particular.

In *Richard III*, an early tragedy (1592-93), many ghosts appear to Richard and Richmond just before their final battle. The ghosts come to them in their dreams, offering comfort and hope to Richmond, torment and doom to Richard. The ghosts actually appear on stage, though they are meant to represent dreams. On awaking, Richard cries out, "Have mercy, Jesu!—Soft! I did but dream. O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!" (5.3.178-79.) In this early example, seeds of ambiguity exist already. Though the ghosts are visible to the audience, they are really the stuff of dreams. Yet the same ghosts appear to Richmond, implying that these are more than dreams. Though Richard is frightened by the dreams, he quickly acknowledges that they are but the phantoms of his own derangement, his "coward conscience." And though the ghosts are but dreams, they speak the truth; they are not lying demons but are faithful messengers of hope and doom. On the other hand, the fact that any spirit, demon or otherwise, could rise up on All Souls' Eve, confuses the issue considerably.

In *Julius Caesar* (1599), another tragedy, a ghost appears to Brutus just before he, like Richard, must go to meet his doom in battle. The sense of ambiguity is as strong here as it is in *Richard III*. On seeing the apparition, which appears on stage, Brutus immediately questions his own sense of sight: "I think it is the weakness of mine eyes that shapes this monstrous apparition" (4.3.276-77). The very options Frye offers for interpreting Hamlet's ghost are supplied by Brutus to interpret Caesar's ghost: "Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil . . .?" he cries out. By consciously invoking these options through Brutus, Shakespeare has heightened our sense of ambiguity. The ghost's response is no less ambiguous: "[I am] thy evil spirit, Brutus." In this classic equivocation, the ghost opens up the additional possibility that he is a visual manifestation of Brutus' conscience. The fact that Lucius, Claudius, and Varro are all asleep when the ghost appears makes the ghost's prophecy of the meeting at Philippi all the more ambiguous and equivocal, since the message leaves Brutus in considerable doubt about his fate, and no one has heard the message but Brutus. It is likely that though Shakespeare's audience knew that Brutus was doomed, they would still be uncertain exactly how the rebel would meet his doom, precisely because of the ghost's dramatic equivocation. Here ambiguity unquestionably creates dramatic tension.

In *Hamlet* (1603), Shakespeare's use of dramatic ambiguity is bold. First, the ghost is visible to others while they are awake; in fact, the watchmen are perfect witnesses, for their job is to perceive with keen senses whatever is amiss during the night. Yet when Horatio commands it ("By Heaven I charge thee, speak!" [1.1.49]), he cannot raise a response from it. It is only when

Hamlet is by himself that the ghost speaks, so once again dreadful ambiguity is created: is this just Hamlet's own wounded conscience speaking to him? Even in the "swearing" scene, Horatio cannot comprehend why Hamlet keeps moving; obviously only Hamlet can sense the ghost beneath him. The bewildered Horatio declares, "Oh, day and night, but this is woundrous strange!" (1.5.164).

In *Macbeth*, ambiguity remains a significant motif, but takes another imaginative turn. When the ghost of Banquo enters, undoubtedly rising from the trap door in Shakespeare's Globe, no one can see the ghost but Macbeth, though everyone is awake. Ironically, Shakespeare's audience could see the ghost, intensifying the dramatic ambiguity of the scene. (Some modern productions do not show the ghost entering, so the intense irony of the production itself would be partially lost.) "Oh, proper stuff! This is the very painting of your fear," rails Lady Macbeth at her husband (3.4.60-61). The fact that Banquo has just been murdered in the previous scene, and that he is able to rise from the same area of the stage where his murder has taken place (in the Globe production), makes the ghost real to the audience. He is certainly real to Macbeth, who describes his "gory locks." Yet to all the others on stage, there is no ghost; it is simply that "His Highness is not well."

In *Lear* there is only the briefest hint of a ghost, in 5.3. 310-11. As Lear dies, he looks at Cordelia and cries out, "Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips, Look there, look there!" This sort of phantasm, rising from the mouth of the dead Cordelia, could not be created easily on the stage in Shakespeare's day, so the audience is left to imagine the vision based on Lear's last words, his dying testament, so to speak. Edgar and Kent do not see the ghost, so for them Lear's last words are ambiguous; indeed, if Lear is still mad, there is some question whether he has "seen" anything. But it is equally possible that Lear sees the ghost because of a rarified clarity of sight that he lacked in earlier parts of the play (or perhaps because his own spirit is leaving his body), and his recognition of Cordelia's ghost is a strong hint of redemption and reconciliation. Thus dramatic intensity is maintained in the play, through ambiguity, to its closing scene.

In *Cymbeline* (1610), the function of the ghosts takes an unusual turn: Posthunus' father, mother, and brothers come to Posthumus, asleep in a jail cell; their mission seems to be to complain about how unfair God has been to Posthunus in particular and to his family in general. Jove's entertaining reprisal, throwing a thunderbolt as he descends, *deus ex machina*, to humble the ghosts and assure them that "Whom best I love I cross" (5.4.101), demonsrates that the purpose of the ghosts' presence in Posthumus' dream is not to create drama, ambiguity, or irony; rather it is an entertaining and clever way to assure the audience that all will be well. Though on awaking Posthumus ironically declares, "Poor wretches that depend on greatness' favor dream as I have done, wake, and find nothing," the ambiguity created is not as intense; we do not suspect Posthumus' ghosts of equivocation, nor do we think him mad, especially when the jailer enters, asks if Posthumus is ready for death, and the warrior jokingly replies, "Overroasted rather; ready long ago" (5.4.153).

A much more touching vision occurs in *Henry VIII*, one of Shakespeare's last plays. Asleep before being led to her death, Katherine sees a vision of "six personages, clad in white robes," who by their ritual procession convince the sleeping Katharine that her sacrifice will be accepted in heaven. Awaking, Katharine asks if any in the room saw "a blessed troop invite me to a banquet, whose bright faces cast thousand beams upon me, like the sun"? (4.2.87-89). Here the vision, seen by the audience, is elaborate, but unusually effective because of the silence during the vision. Like Lear, Katharine is able to see such visions because of rarified sight given to those graced by heaven. It is of course ironic that the audience can behold the same beatific vision, and the scene takes on a redemptive quality that could not fail to touch an audience. Yet, as in *Cymbeline*, ambiguity for dramatic effect does not seem to be a primary consideration in the scene.

What conclusions may be drawn from these comparisons? First, we must recognize that ambiguity, far from being a problem only in *Hamlet*, dominates every scene in which a ghost appears in Shakespeare's plays, with the apparent exceptions of those in *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII*. What is obvious at this point is that these two later plays, unlike the others considered, are not tragedies: one is a comedy, the other a history. One would hardly expect anything to function the same precise way in different genres. However, in the context of their respective genres, *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII* make just as effective use of ghosts as do the tragedies, thus vindicating Shakespeare's versatility.

In terms of interpreting the function of Hamlet's ghost, we can surely conclude from this comparison that Shakespeare consciously intended the ambiguity of this ghost, as he did the ambiguity of the ghosts in all the tragedies in which they appear. In addition, it is safe to say that it is not the ambiguity alone that determines the unique importance of Hamlet's ghost in the outcome of the tragedy, but rather some other factor, such as the relative importance assigned the ghost in terms of lines spoken or of his moment of entrance in the play, for surely other ghosts would be equally important if their ambiguity were the only factor creating dramatic tension. In this regard, it is most revealing that in *Hamlet* the ghost appears in the first scene of the first act, though of course the same is true of the ghost in *The Spanish Tragedy*; the difference is that Hamlet's ghost is an active participant, not merely a chorus, so placing him in an active role in the first scene is a bold, imaginative variation on the uses to which an ambiguous ghost can be put in a drama. I have already noted such innovations in technique in other plays.

It would be a mistake to look too far beyond Shakespeare himself for the inspiration behind the imaginative creation of the ambiguous ghost. As Wolfgang Clemen points out in a discussion of pre-Shakespearean ghost-scenes, the importance of ghosts to the action of a drama is established firmly for the first time in Shakespeare. Concerning the ambiguity of Shakespeare's ghosts, Clemen is especially convinced that "Elizabethan theories about ghosts . . . throw less light on Shakespeare's ghosts than do considerations of dramatic and artistic effect."[2] Thus Roland Frye's attempt to place the ghost scene of *Hamlet* in its cultural and historical context is certainly a debatable tactic, though he reaches a conclusion similar to mine. Much more revealing, I feel, is the apparently unique and imaginative consistency with which Shakespeare created his ambiguous ghosts for the tragedies.

Not only does such a comparison make more sense of the dramatic function of Hamlet's ghost, it also clears up a number of problems in other tragedies. For instance, if Lear has seen a ghost (very much in the manner of Katharine's epiphany in *Henry VIII)* rather than, as several critics have proposed, thinking in a last fit of madness that he sees Cordelia alive, with lips moving,[3] the play retains its tragic integrity, and we avoid the pitfall of turning it, as critic William Empson did, into the story of the "eternal fool and scapegoat who has experienced everything and learned nothing."

Roland Frye's efforts at finding a context for the character of Hamlet's ghost are hardly off the mark, however. His outlining of the four different contexts, mentioned earlier in this essay, is instructive, for it helps us to chart the various elements of the ghost's ambiguity. What it does not demonstrate, unfortunately, is that Shakespeare actually intended such ambiguity. For instance, it is perhaps safe to assume that some elements of the ghost scenes in Shakespeare are mere devices designed to move the action along or even stall for time between scenes. Yet the presence of functional, dramatically significant ghosts in Shakespeare's earlier plays precludes our stating that ghosts are used only as devices, and the fact that the ambiguous ghost exists in early, middle, and late periods prevents our stating that this aspect of his art evolved, in the sense of moving from ineptitude to artistry (though it must be admitted that Hamlet's ghost is subtler than pageant in *Richard III)*. The same conclusions can be drawn when we try to see the ghosts as guilt manifestations, demons out of hell, Catholics, Protestants, or heathens. From the very beginning, Shakespeare has used ghosts in a complex, dramatic manner that defies many of the conventions of his era and also forces an audience to imagine and speculate—with marvelous results.

Let us now see how this comparison informs a rereading of the ghost scenes in *Hamlet*. First off, Shakespeare's audience has met others of his ghosts in *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar*, though these appear at the end of those two plays. The entrance of a ghost in the first act of *Hamlet* could portend only doom for Prince Hamlet; thus, long before he appears on stage the protagonist is a marked man in the eyes of the audience. Another thing the audience would remember is the ambiguity of the ghost scenes in the early plays. Building on this expectation, Shakespeare has Hamlet grill Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo in 1.2 about the ghost they reported seeing. The audience would also expect a portentous speech from the ghost, yet none is given in the first scene; only when Hamlet decides to join the watch does the ghost speak, and then only when Hamlet removes himself from other listeners. It is obvious that Shakespeare is playing subtly on the expectations of his audience here, now tightening, now loosening the sense of dramatic tension in the first act (it has already been shown that Shakespeare's ghosts tend to speak only to one person at a time, in such a way that others cannot listen in).

The ghost's announcement of its identity ("I am thy father's spirit") is similar to the ghost of Caesar's "Thy evil spirit, Brutus," and it is possible that Shakespeare's audience could have perceived the parallel. Thus to a certain degree, our judgment about the nature of the ghost could be influenced by ghosts in other plays. To me it seems likely that Shakespeare intended his listeners to make such a connection. But even if no one perceived the parallel, Hamlet's ghost creates ambiguity in its speech:

> I am thy father's spirit,
> Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
> And for the day confined to fast in fires
> Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
> Are burnt and purged away.
>
> (1.5.9-13.)

There is no question that Shakespeare is doing something very innovative here. As Frye points out, the apparition may be a demon, not a ghost from purgatory, for though demons could not lie outright, they could equivocate,[1] and a lot of meaning turns on the phrase "a certain time." Yet there is nothing fundamentally different about the way the ghost functions in *Hamlet* and the way it functions in *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, or even in *Lear*. Of course, the ghosts deliver different messages, as one might expect from different scenes and circumstances in different plays. But the differences in function are of degree rather than of kind. King Hamlet's ghost is the most effective of Shakespeare ghosts, not because he is ambiguous, but because he is a key figure in the first act, his speeches propel action, and he is perceived by everyone to be real (his ambiguity stemming from other factors). It is even possible that one reason Prince Hamlet is often perceived as vacillating or indecisive is that the ghost, by comparison, looks so much more hell-bent on revenge.

This ghostly desire becomes especially apparent in the "swearing" scene, in which the ghost, beneath the platform, follows the prince around, crying "Swear" to Hamlet's ears only, while Hamlet's companions chase the prince, not knowing why he will not hold still for the oathtaking. There is marvelous horror in this scene, macabre stage business, but it is not a unique event in Shakespeare. A very similar type of incident troubles Macbeth, who, recomposed after first seeing Banquo's ghost, attempts to offer a toast, only to be completely undone by the sudden re-appearance of the ghost. "Avaunt!" he cries out in despair (3.4.93). D.J. Palmer writes that the "traditional stage-business of dropping his cup, or else hurling it from him, on the Ghost's reappearance, seems entirely appropriate."[6]

It should also be obvious that presenting Hamlet's ghost in the first act allows other characters, notably Hamlet himself, to reflect through the rest of the play on the ghost's ambiguity. But note that it is not the ambiguity that allows this as much as it is placing the ghost scene in the first act, instead of the third, fourth, or fifth. Such double-edged, ironic commentary begins during the swearing scene: Hamlet declares, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (1.5.166-67). The reference here to the ghost is obvious; the reference to potential revenge is perhaps equally obvious. Or consider the ambiguity of Hamlet's declaration to Rosencrantz: ". . . for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (2.2.255-57), a commentary on the nature of moral judgments, but also a reflection on whether the apparition is a real ghost or a disguised demon. Hamlet's famous soliloquy—often thought to be an inner debate about suicide—is basically an attempt to decide whether in seeking revenge he will be doing his father's will for the sake of the kingdom, or will be doing the will of a demon, assuring himself a place in hell. Most ironic of all perhaps is Hamlet's definition of death in this speech: "The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn no traveller returns" (3.1.80). Has his father indeed returned from the dead, or is the prince self-deceived or perhaps deceived by demons? Obviously the placing of the ghost scene in the first act was tremendously effective, and it is a safe generalization that the closer the ghost scene in any Shakespeare play is to the first act (consider the still very powerful ghost scene in the third act of *Macbeth)*, the more ultimate influence that scene will have on the outcome of the play.

It will never be possible to resolve the ambiguity in Hamlet's ghost, but it is clearly possible to see Hamlet's ghost, not as an anomaly or as a half-baked attempt on Shakespeare's part to blend revenger formula with *hamartia*, but rather as one of many ghostly creations that Shakespeare designed with ambiguity in mind, and which he used to exceptional advantage in order to play on his audience's expectations.[7]

NOTES

1. Roland Mushat Frye, *The Renaissance Hamlet: Issues and Responses in 1600* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), p. 14. All reference to the play are from *Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Ed. G.B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968).

2. Wolfgang Clemen, *A Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III* (London: Methuen and Co., 1957), pp. 217, 214.

3. J.K. Walton, "Lear's Last Speech" in *Aspects of King Lear*. Ed. Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), p. 73.

4. Ibid.

5. Frye (n. 1 above), p. 19. Perhaps the earliest attempt to prove the ghost in *Hamlet* simply a figment of Hamlet's imagination was that made by W.W. Greg, "Hamlet's Hallucination," *Modern Language Review*, 12 (Oct. 1917), 393-421.

6. D.J. Palmer, "'A new Gorgon': Visual Effects in *Macbeth*" in *Focus on Macbeth*. Ed. John Russell Brown (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 60.

7. In the writing of this article I am indebted to Professor J. Wasson of Washington State University for several insights.

The Killing of Polonius

DAVID THATCHER

There are a number of widespread assumptions about the action which, for many, is the turning-point in Hamlet: the killing of Polonius. I would like to re-examine this killing (its motivation, its interpretation, its consequences) to show some of the imprecision, ambiguities and confusions which surround it, and to suggest that patterns of guilt, revenge and justice in the play are less clear and less symmetrical than is commonly thought.

Let me begin with the assumption that in the closet scene "Polonius is slain by mistake for the King,"[1] and even that Hamlet, though he kills the wrong man, is "deliberately and violently" seeking to fulfil his mission of revenge.[2] The Arden editor relates the killing to Hamlet's bloodthirsty lines at 3. 2. 379-383 and argues that it is "with his bloody passion still unassuaged" that he thrusts his sword through the arras, thus becoming "the villain in a cause which images his."[3] Hamlet's question "Is it the King?" is glossed by another editor as follows: "So Hamlet supposed when he made the thrust."[4] Are these assumptions justified?

At the moment immediately before, or during, thrusting his rapier through the arras Hamlet may have no clear idea who might be there—it could have been an inquisitive servant, a thief, a Norwegian spy, a rapist. There could have been more than one intruder, increasing the perceived danger. When Polonius cries out "O, I am slain"[5] Hamlet apparently fails to recognise, for the second time, that the voice belongs to Polonius, and that it does not belong to the King—the arras, presumably, is thick enough to muffle the voice but not the words which are spoken. The Queen's response to the cry, "O me, what hast thou done?" implies that she fears the worst at the same time concealing that she knows the identity of Hamlet's victim. Hamlet's reply is significant: "Nay, I know not. Is it the King?" The first four words suggest that he is ignorant, or is pretending to be ignorant, about the effect of his rapier thrust and/or the identity of the hidden victim. More problematic is his query "Is it the King?" Is this addressed to the Queen (implying that Hamlet thinks she might know) or to himself, as a kind of aside? Did he think the King was merely eavesdropping, or using the Queen as a decoy to give him an opportunity to kill? Are we to see the query as equesting confirmation of a supposition entertained before, or while, he struck the fatal blow (a supposition which carried a degree of credence varying from improbability to probability)? Or, especially in view of the pause between "Nay, I know not" and "Is it the King?", does it reflect, post facto, a sudden realization, or even hope, that it might, after all, be the King he has killed, thus fulfilling his revenge and compensating for the opportunity passed over in the prayer-scene? An inflected stress on "Is" would convey a request for confirmation, a stress on "the King" a belated realization; the query could also be delivered with an intonation that suggested that Hamlet was horror-struck at the possibility of regicide, a deceit necessary in the presence of his mother. It is at this point that Hamlet, in order to resolve his doubts, "*lifts up the arras and discovers Polonius, dead.*" This stage direction is not found either in Q2 or F1, and is omitted in some modern editions. Wilson, Jenkins and Hibbard follow the example of Rowe and Capell by placing it after Hamlet's words "Is it the King?" (l. 26); however many editors, including Edwards, place it after Hamlet's "Ay, lady, twas my word" (l.30) The rationale for the earlier placing is never explained, but it should surely be obvious: it is implausible that Hamlet should wait a moment longer than necessary to resolve his doubts, and Gertrude would have no reason to change from "O me, what hast thou done?" to "O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!" unless the dead body of Polonius had been revealed in the interim. Hamlet's following couplet can then be interpreted as meaning that killing a minister of state (which is what he has just done) is "almost as bad" as killing a king (which is what Claudius has done) or as committing incest by marrying (which is what she has done). The common view that Hamlet is testing his mother for complicity is, I think, mistaken. Interpretations of the scene, like Madariaga's, which depend on the later placing of the stage direction are extremely suspect.

Hamlet apostrophizes the corpse: "I took thee for thy better." This seems less a statement of mistaken belief than an expression of disappointed hope. But if it expresses disappointment, even frustration, what is Gertrude to make of her son's attitude? She knows nothing, of course, of Hamlet's intentions as an avenger, but she may be surprised that his dislike of Claudius, which he has taken no pains to conceal, has reached the level of hostility where a failure to kill him in circumstances which could pass as accidental causes him chagrin. It is probably fruitless to speculate what consequences a regicide at this point would have had for Hamlet, and whether he would have cared what they were. But the ambiguity remains: did Hamlet "mistake" Polonius for the King before or after his rapier-thrust? We can be certain that it was a human being he intended to kill (he hears a voice and cries "Dead for a ducat, dead"), but we can have no assurance that it was the King he thought he was killing, and only in this latter instance are we entitled to talk of a case of mistaken identity. Had Hamlet shouted, for example, "Revenge at last!" as he thrust his rapier through the arras there would be no ambiguity. Our ignorance about Hamlet's precise motivation, or even his state of mind, makes it very difficult to agree that the killing of Polonius is "a morally determinate action"[6] which Hamlet must find a way to expiate. The killing of Polonius, it seems to me, cannot bear the weight of moral significance which Bowers, for example, places upon it. In comparing Greek with Elizabethan drama Bowers writes: "The general framework of Elizabethan tragic ethics, which depend upon the Christian doctrine of free will and personal responsibility, demands that the slaying of Polonius be more than an unlucky accident" (Bowers, p. 213). The argument is circular: the so-called "framework of Elizabethan tragic ethics" is a concept supposedly deduced from Elizabethan drama as a whole and then applied to one particular play to determine the moral dimension of a single incident. But, even if there is such a "framework" as Bowers claims, what if *Hamlet* is an exception? "Greek tragedy," Bowers declares, "might have made of this scene a study of simple fatal error, something like the hotheaded bad luck by which Oedipus slew his father." One is struck, not so much by the inapplicability of this example, but by its striking relevance.

It would be quite legitimate to regard the killing of Polonius, whether "hotheaded" or not, as an "unlucky accident" pure and simple, and a coroner's inquest nowadays (and perhaps in Shakespeare's time) could be expected to rule death by misadventure. In a court of law one can imagine Hamlet, facing the charge of murder, claiming that he was acting in self-defence (and in defence of his mother) against an intruder (or intruders, as it might have turned out) and that it would have been imprudent to have lifted the arras before striking the blow. He might claim that he had good reason to feel that his life was being threatened, and that he acted decisively and without hesitation to ward off the threat. Would not a jury be likely to reach a verdict of "justifiable homicide"? Had not the victim been an innocent man Hamlet's swift response would have been praised. The Queen calls Hamlet's action "rash," but that is only because she knows who is hiding behind the arras; Hamlet, who elsewhere describes himself as "not splenative and rash" (5.1.254) but can praise "rashness" and "indiscretion" when it suits him (5.2.6-9), would probably agree that his action was "rash" in the sense of "hasty" or "sudden," but not in the sense of "unconsidered" or "ill-advised."[7] It is Polonius ("Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool") he blames for acting without due consideration. The cause of Hamlet's regret is not the deed but the upshot of the deed, that is, that the victim turned out to be an innocent man. This is his misfortune, as he thinks it to be Polonius's ("Take thy fortune"). Referring to the body of Polonius Hamlet says, in lines frequently discussed: "But heaven hath pleas'd it so, / To punish me with this and this with me, / That I must be their scourge and minister" (3.4.175-177). According to Bowers, Hamlet's crime is one of impatience, and heaven "has punished him for anticipating by his own deed the opportunity that was destined for the future";[8] and R.W. Dent, in an otherwise neat demolition of Bowers' distinctions between "scourge and minister," offers the untenable suggestion that Hamlet sees in the death of Polonius "a divine punishment for his not having already revenged his father's murder."[9]

Equally wide of the mark, it seems to me, are suggestions that Hamlet is being punished *for* his "savage passions" or by "the weight now on his conscience,"[10] or that the punishment will come at Claudius's hands: "Hamlet sees that the King will at once perceive that he killed Polonius by mistake for him, and will take measures accordingly."[11] Critics find it tempting to posit reasons for Hamlet's "punishment," just as it is tempting to posit reasons for his so-called delay—but it is not necessary in either case. To think that Polonius is being punished for eavesdropping is to strain one's belief in divine justice. Since Hamlet himself does not give specific reasons, we can take his references to punishment as simply his *interpretation* that fate, or the will of God, has dealt him a blow and that he must submit himself to it. Just as later he will note "a special providence in the fall of a sparrow,"[12] here he sees a special providence in the fall of a Polonius. Of course, Hamlet's interpretation may be questioned—Polonius's death may simply be regarded as an accident, even though Hamlet himself did not see it this way.

Hamlet assures his mother "for this same lord, / I do repent" and promises to "bestow" him, the only reason for which (since the closet is not Gertrude's bedchamber, but her private apartment) seems to be to clear the body off the stage. He also declares that he "will answer well / The death I gave him." Does "answer" mean "atone for" (Jenkins), "give good reasons for" (Edwards), "make a satisfactory response to any charge concerning" (Hibbard)? In view of Hamlet's subsequent playing hide-and-seek with the corpse, Hamlet did not feel obliged to make a public expiation, whatever private expiation he may have intended and even performed. The readings of Edwards and Hibbard seem preferable: Hamlet realizes he must explain and if possible extenuate himself as convincingly as he can, if only to survive long enough to carry out his mission of revenge. Bidding his mother good night, he utters the darkly enigmatic couplet: "I must be cruel only to be kind. This [F: Thus] bad begins, and worse remains behind." Is one to be more perplexed by the ambiguity of these lines ("must" refers to past, present or future action(s)? "cruel" to whom? "kind" to whom? in what sense "kind"? "this" or "thus"? what is "this" or "thus"? what is "bad"? for whom "bad"? what is "worse"? for whom "worse"? what is "behind"?) or by the confidence of the commentators in thinking that a definite sense can be construed and that their definite sense is definitely the right one)? Hamlet's remark "This man shall set me packing," is gratifyingly less problematic, suggesting that he anticipates being sent to England with even greater haste, or forced to think of some extenuation to ensure he is sent to England as opposed to being incarcerated or, at the worst, executed. There are some options open to him: 1. he can present himself, as he has already done, as the victim of fate, of heaven's purpose; 2. he can claim it was an accident, that is, not his own purpose, and 3. he can attribute it to his "madness." One might expect him to discuss these options with his mother, since she is as concerned as he is to secure maximum leniency, but he does not. Nor is it clear to whom Hamlet thinks he must "answer"—presumably Claudius, since he does not give a thought either to Ophelia or to Laertes. It is purely coincidental that, independently, mother and son choose "madness" as the extenuating factor (whether Gertrude "really" believes her son "mad" does not affect the issue). To the King's eager question, "How does Hamlet," the Queen replies:

> Mad as the sea and wind when both contend
> Which is the mightier, In his lawless fit,
> Behind the arras hearing something stir,
> Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat',
> And in this brainish apprehension kills
> The unseen good old man.
>
> (4.1.7-12)

Polonius was right: Nature does indeed make mothers partial. Hamlet heard somebody *speak*, not something *stir*, and for Hamlet's metaphorical rat is substituted an attempt at pest-control which, unfortunately, got a little out of hand. In mitigation of her son's deed she disguises as delusion what, in fact, was a deliberate attempt to kill a human being; she also claims that Hamlet is contrite since "a weeps for what is done."[13] In apparent acceptance of the reliability of this account, Claudius informs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that "Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain" and orders them to find Hamlet and the body which Hamlet had told his mother he was going to "lug" into the "neighbour room." Even if Gertrude had not withheld this piece of information from her husband,[14] it would have been of no assistance to the searchers, as Hamlet has decided to adopt the mask of madman and dispose of the body elsewhere.

"It had been so with us had we been there," exclaims Claudius. Kittredge believes the act to have been deliberate: "The King immediately perceives what the Queen cannot know—that Hamlet had intended to kill him when he thrust his sword through the tapestry; and henceforth he has no doubt that Hamlet is sane and that he is his mortal enemy."[15] There is, however, not a shred of evidence *in the text* that Claudius, as a result of the play-scene, suspected that Hamlet had discovered his crime and was bent on revenge, nor that Claudius doubted the Queen's version of events in the closet-scene, i.e., that he doubted its accuracy, not as a description, but as an interpretation, for to him Hamlet was simply *feigning* madness and its attendant delusions. Throughout the play Claudius consistently takes the position that Hamlet is dangerous because, being insane, he is subject to uncontrollable and unpredictable outbreaks of frenzied violence, to which even a King is not immune. In saying "It had been so with us had we been there" Claudius is surely recalling the time he hid behind the arras with Polonius to spy on Hamlet and Ophelia, and is simply relieved at the narrow escape he has had at the hands of a man, he goes on to say in the succeeding line, whose "liberty is full of threats to all." He wonders how Hamlet's "bloody deed" will "be answer'd" (echoing Hamlet's "answer for" of the previous scene), and anticipates that responsibility will be laid at his door for being negligent in not having confined "this mad young man." Madness, Hamlet's extenuation, becomes the King's embarrassment. He resolves to "ship him hence" before the first light of dawn, acknowledging that "this vile deed / We must with all our majesty and skill / Both countenance and excuse."[16] The King's task is to exonerate himself from blame, and at the same time give the Queen the impression it is Hamlet he is protecting. It must be admitted he seems to have handled this dual problem with neither majesty nor skill. The Danish people, he says, are "muddied, / Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers / For good Polonius' death" (4.5.81-83). Presumably this refers to reaction to the report of that death, or to the lack of such a report. The decision to bury Polonius clandestinely, "in hugger-mugger," is judged in retrospect to have been a foolish one—no reasons are given by Claudius for thinking it foolish, and we can only surmise it was because it served to rouse rather than placate public criticism. The King has somehow learnt that Laertes has recently arrived from France, his ears full of "pestilent speeches of his father's death" peddled by the rumour-mongers who, he alleges, lack solid and accurate information ("of matter beggar'd") and make him accountable. The steps Claudius takes to quell enquiry, suspicion and blame have apparently had the very opposite effect.

A messenger announces that Laertes has just arrived in Elsinore at the head of an insurrectionary "rabble" which demands that he be made king. It is not clear what has incited this rebellion, nor to what degree Laertes associates himself with it.[17] Perhaps it is less a real rebellion than a show of force designed to intimidate Claudius and make him more receptive to Laertes' demands. "Where is this king?" he roars. Although bad news is reputed to travel gleefully fast, neither the King nor the Queen has any idea what Laertes knows about the circumstances of Polonius's death and funeral, so his first question must take them by surprise: "O thou vile king, / Give me my father" (4.5.115-116). The word "vile" suggests culpability on Claudius's part, but not until the end of this scene, when Laertes demands an explanation for what he calls his father's "obscure funeral," do we grasp that he must be accusing the king of failing to arrange proper burial rites, and wants the body so that these rites can be administered (Laertes' punctilious concern for family honour and proper ceremony are also evident at the funeral of his sister.). His second question, "Where is my father," must logically refer to Polonius's gravesite, but the king, who admits not understanding the cause of Laertes' irate and treasonable behaviour, misses the point entirely and replies with the laconic and redundant word— "Dead." "But not by him," the Queen hastily interjects, anxious to protect her husband from the rebel's wrath.[18] Since Laertes does not ask the next logical questions (such as "Who was the murderer, then?" or "Has he been apprehended and punished?") are we to assume that he already knows Hamlet was directly responsible? If so, why is not his anger directed at Hamlet as well as at the king? If not, he is very incurious about finding out something which must be of the utmost importance to him. Without waiting for a reply to his next question, "How came he dead?" Laertes impetuously voices his determination to be revenged, failing to see that no revenge is called for if he can be persuaded that his father's death was entirely accidental. Now that Laertes' intentions are clear, the King hastens to assure him that he is "guiltless of your father's death," and proposes that Laertes consult his "wisest friends" (who may number among Claudius's "wisest friends" (4.2.38), to arbitrate the matter.[19] Should Laertes find him guiltless, the King continues:

> Be you content to lend your patience to us,
> And we shall jointly labour with your soul
> To give it due content.

What is Laertes supposed to make of this vaguely-worded promise? Is the King promising revenge, or to seek, or reveal, the identity of Polonius's true murderer? Or both, since the first promise cannot be honoured unless the second is too? Whatever Laertes construes, he accepts the King's undertaking, insisting that his father's "means of death" and "obscure funeral" both stand in need of clarification. The King, assuring him that his questions will be answered, concludes the scene by saying "And where th' offence is, let the great axe fall," a line that conceals whether or not the King knows who Polonius's murderer is, and, even more perplexingly, that hints at judicial punishment rather than personal revenge. It could be that the King is thinking of the execution awaiting Hamlet in England, since, according to Hamlet's account of the commission, his head was to have been "struck off" with no time wasted on "the grinding of the axe" (5.2.24-25).

A further conversation between Claudius and Laertes must be presumed to have taken place during 4.5, since scene 6 appears to *begin in medias res*. In this scene we find Claudius *reminding* a much calmer Laertes that "you have heard, and with a knowing ear, / That he which hath your father slain / Pursu'd my life." Obviously, as the scene later makes clear, it is Hamlet who is being alluded to. We still do not know what Claudius has told Laertes about his father's "means of death," only that Hamlet killed him. Did the King offer supporting evidence that Hamlet had made attempts on his life, or provide an explanation of Hamlet's possible motives—if not, did Laertes ask for such enlightenment? Evidence for the King's allegation is in very short supply. The Arden editor naively points to Hamlet's "Is it the King?" and "I took thee for thy better", but there is no way Claudius could have known about these statements unless Gertrude had told him, which she does not do in any on-stage conversation—in any case they are highly ambiguous. We would also have to assume, without textual evidence, that Claudius has chosen not to accept Gertrude's version of events. The other "evidence" cited by the Arden editor is Claudius's first reaction to the news of Polonius's death: "It had been so with us had we been there." This may simply mean, as has been argued, Claudius realizes how close he had been to becoming an accidental, not intentional, victim. Claudius's charge, then, that Hamlet had "pursu'd" his life seems to be a fabrication designed to give the king a plausible motivation for regarding Hamlet as dangerous and expendable (but if Hamlet was homicidal why not lock him up?) and to elicit Laertes's sympathy and support, which it succeeds in doing: "It well appears," says Laertes, and goes on to ask, very pertinently, why Claudius "proceeded not against these feats, / So crimeful and so capital in nature."[20] Claudius then gives two reasons why he could not take Hamlet to public trial: 1. such a trial would not only humiliate and distress Gertrude, but a verdict of guilty (which Claudius takes for granted) would result in a harsh sentence (imprisonment or death) causing her even greater suffering; 2. such a trial would be politically unwise, on account of "the great love" the common people bore him.[21] But we should note that Claudius has chosen, unilaterally, to send Hamlet to England without regard to Gertrude's feelings and to the likelihood of a popular outcry, an inconsistency which, since Laertes must have known of Hamlet's whereabouts (his response, shortly afterwards, to Hamlet's imminent return to Denmark is not consistent with ignorance on this matter), he should have detected and, therefore, been less inclined to take the King's arguments on trust. "But my revenge will come," vows Laertes, with myopic single-mindedness. Even though the King is expecting news concerning Hamlet's execution in England, he has said nothing in the past, and says nothing now, to dampen Laertes's fiery lust for revenge, and may even have deliberately fuelled it by not adducing Hamlet's "madness" as an extenuating factor in his father's slaying, and also perhaps by making it seem a deliberate assault. The possibility that Laertes was misled in this way is confirmed at Ophelia's funeral, during which he curses the man (Hamlet is clearly meant) whose "wicked deed" (5.1.241) resulted, he believes, in his sister's insanity and, he may also have believed, in her death as well. Riled by what he takes to be Laertes's extravagant display of grief, Hamlet challenges him and Laertes utters a fairly unoriginal curse, "The devil take thy soul,," these being the last words he speaks in this scene. They grapple at the graveside, Laertes's fingers at Hamlet's throat. The King orders them to be plucked asunder, and both he and the Queen exclaim that Hamlet is mad. Whereupon Hamlet turns to Laertes, and says:

> Hear you, sir.
> What is the reason that you use me thus?
> I lov'd you ever.
>
> (5.1.283-285)

This is an extraordinary question. Unless Hamlet is to be judged naive or insensitive, we have to accept *either* that Hamlet, although he heard Laertes "prate of mountains" (5.1.275), did not overhear Laertes's remark four lines earlier about the "wicked deed" which led to Ophelia's insanity, *or* he did hear it and thought that somebody else's crime (possibly rape) was being referred to. Neither Horatio, nor anyone else, has told him the background to Ophelia's death, even though Horatio was well-informed and could have answered the questions which Hamlet, at first sight of the procession, asked concerning the identity of the deceased and the reason for the "maimed rites," and also could have confirmed Hamlet's suspicion that it was a case of suicide (5.1.211-214). The open coffin allows Hamlet to identify "the fair Ophelia," but he never inquires further into the circumstances of her untimely end. By asking the question "What is the reason that you use me thus?" Hamlet must assume that Laertes is ignorant of the role he played in the death of Polonius, or, at the very least, has no grounds to feel antagonistic towards him. Does Hamlet imagine that knowledge of his involvement was limited to members of the court circle only? News of his "madness" has obviously filtered down the layers of Danish society, even to the lowly gravedigger, who refers to the prince as "he that is mad and sent to England" (5.1.143-144). Hamlet asks, "Why was he sent to England?" perhaps trying to ascertain whether this was widely known to be connected with the killing of Polonius. The gravedigger makes no reference to this killing, nor, presumably, did any of the "rabble" who supported Laertes on his return from France—otherwise Laertes would have known who the murderer was before the King told him.

Not until Laertes explicitly says so in the last scene of the play is Hamlet informed that he is the intended object of some kind of "revenge." However, many editors and critics have believed he knew this already, basing their opinion on Hamlet's apology for his behaviour at Ophelia's funeral:

> But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
> That to Laertes I forgot myself;
> For by the image of my cause I see
> The portraiture of his.[22]

Kittredge (p. 287) observes that these lines offer "a clear indication that Laertes the revenger was meant to be the foil to Hamlet the revenger," and the Arden editor (p. 398) comments: "The irony, which Hamlet does not remark on but we can hardly miss, is that the image which shows Laertes as a revenger like Hamlet must also show Hamlet as revenge's object." However, we might question whether "cause" means "mission of revenge." It clearly does in Hamlet's reference to the "form and cause" of his father's ghost and in his request to Horatio that he report "his cause aright."[23] But in this instance "cause" surely means his grief at his father's death, a grief compounded by the death of Ophelia. As he goes on to say:

> I'll court his favours.
> But sure the bravery of his grief did put me
> Into a tow'ring passion.

Nothing which Laertes says during the burial indicates his role as revenger, and his only words to Hamlet are "The devil take thy soul!" It would have been imprudent of him to reveal that he was bent on avenging his father's death, and if Hamlet had known, or even suspected, such an intention he would have sensed danger in the proposed fencing-match, and probably not accepted the challenge. Moreover, it is not an easy task to "court the favours" of a man you know is intent on killing you. By the time of this speech to Horatio Hamlet may have belatedly recognised what he and Laertes have in common, namely, grief at the death of Ophelia and grief at the death of a father. That is where the portraits would appear to match, not in the task of revenge. It is not, therefore, as strange as the Arden editor (p. 144) thinks that "Hamlet does not expatiate more upon his dual role" (that is as agent and victim of revenge) since Hamlet gives no sign of regard in himself as Laertes's potential victim. That the audience can see this role-mirroring is, of course, another matter. Laertes is a revenger, but his revenge does not image Hamlet's in an exact pattern: 1. Hamlet is acting on his father's command, Laertes on his own initiative; 2. King Hamlet's murder was deliberate, that of Polonius accidental (at least in the sense that it was not Polonius Hamlet intended to kill); 3. the fact of King Hamlet's murder at the hands of Claudius is known only to Hamlet and Horatio, the fact of Polonius's murder common knowledge, although different accounts of it, and of whom is to be held responsible, were possibly in circulation as rumours or deliberate distortions—Ophelia thought that people said her father "made a good end" (4.5.183).

In order not to misunderstand Hamlet's much-debated (and much-criticised apology to Laertes before their fencing-match, we should recognise it as Hamlet's first opportunity to make amends for his "tow'ring passion" at Ophelia's funeral:

> Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong;
> But pardon't as you are a gentleman.
> This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,
> How I am punish'd with a sore distraction.
>
> (5.2.222-225)

Having witnessed the "tow'ring passion" and having heard the King and Queen both refer to Hamlet's "madness," Laertes has every reason to take Hamlet at his word. I don't wish to enter the debate about the ambiguity of the word "madness" which has led some commentators to condemn the apology as casuistical. What I want to challenge is the assumption (by Bradley and others) that what Hamlet sees as requiring pardon is not the "tow'ring passion" at Ophelia's grave but the "hurt" he has done him by killing his father. Hamlet's key words (apart from "I have done you wrong") are these:

> Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil
> Free me so far in your most generous thoughts
> That I have shot my arrow o'er the house
> And hurt my brother.
>
> (5.2.237-240)

Bradley thinks it "evident" that in these words Hamlet is referring to the deaths of Polonius and Ophelia. I cannot see it is evident at all, any more than it can be established what Hamlet meant by the words "I have done you wrong." The imprecision surrounding Hamlet's "sore distraction" also attaches to the unspecified "wrong" and "evil" which the distraction is invoked to excuse. Hamlet senses that Laertes *may* have a grievance against him:

> What I have done
> That might your nature, honour, and exception
> Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Again, there is no mention of any specific deed.[24] Is Hamlet deliberately refraining from particulars (out of delicacy, perhaps) or is he still genuinely mystified as to what Laertes' grievance might be? He *said* he was mystified in the funeral scene ("What is the reason that you use me thus?"); what has changed to make Hamlet feel an apology is in order? Laertes's response is equally ambiguous:

> I am satisfied in nature,
> Whose motive in this case should stir me most
> To my revenge.

This is the first time Hamlet is confronted with Laertes as a possible revenger. But, from Hamlet's point of view, what is the cause of this revenge, his killing of Polonius, his show of disrespect towards the dead body, his behaviour at Ophelia's funeral? Or perhaps some other undisclosed "offence" (a key word in *Hamlet*)? It is not the hypocrisy of Laertes's speech which should attract our attention, but its imprecision. Despite the impression we get in this exchange that Hamlet and Laertes understand what the other is talking about, it may well be that they are talking at cross-purposes.

Johnson objected to Hamlet's defence of "madness" on the grounds that "it is unsuitable to the character of a good or brave man to shelter himself in falsehood," and Bradley, who quotes this objection, confesses he has "momentarily shared" it. But he thinks it springs from "a failure to imagine the situation":

> *What* other defence can we wish Hamlet to have made? I can think of none. He cannot tell the truth. He cannot say to Laertes, 'I meant to stab the King, not your father! He cannot explain why he was unkind to Ophelia. Even on the false supposition that he is referring simply to his

> behaviour at the grave, he can hardly say, I suppose, 'You ranted so abominably that you put me into a towering passion'. *Whatever* he said, it would have to be more or less untrue.[25]

Without giving this passage the full demolitionist, even deconstructionist, treatment it fully deserves, let me just note the following points: 1. Hamlet was under no obligation to apologise to Laertes at all, so if he felt that a defence would reflect badly on him he need not have made one; 2. "I meant to stab the King" far from being the unmentionable "truth," is highly questionable; 3. no one can "explain" why Hamlet was "unkind" to Ophelia; 4. why can't he say to Laertes "you ranted so abominably that you put me into a towering passion" (would it have been untrue, or simply discourteous)? 5. If Hamlet had defended the killing of Polonius on the grounds that it was an accident, would this have been "more or less untrue"? Bradley's apology for Hamlet's apology is tendentious and question-begging: it is he himself who has demonstrated "a failure to imagine the situation."

There is one last exchange between Hamlet and Laertes when both are in their death-throes:

> Laertes: Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.
> Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
> Nor mine on thee. *(Dies)*
> Hamlet: Heaven make thee free of it. I follow thee.[26]

For the first time in the play Laertes tells Hamlet unambiguously that he connects him with his father's death. He forgives him for this as well as for his own death (for which Hamlet is not responsible, since when he wounds Laertes he is unaware that the rapier is poisoned). Laertes's forgiveness is touching, but we do not know whether he makes it as a final, magnanimous gesture or because, pointing to the poisoned cup as evidence that "the King's to blame" (5.2.326), he suspects that Hamlet's deed was not as "wicked" as the King had led him to believe. Perhaps he realizes it may simply have been an accident. When Horatio promises Fortinbras and the ambassadors from England that he will tell them of "accidental judgements, casual slaughters" (5.2.387), is he referring, among others, to the death of Polonius?[27] Immediately after killing Polonius Hamlet himself attributed the death to the workings of Providence, but tried to excuse it (as in his treatment of the body, and possibly in his apology to Laertes) on the grounds of "madness." He never interprets it, even to Laertes or Horatio, as an "accidental judgement" or a "casual slaughter," nor does he acquit himself on the grounds of self-defence. Would these extenuating reasons be unworthy of a tragic hero?

In order to emphasise that "the revenge of Laertes for his father involves Hamlet as its object" (pp. 143-144) Jenkins assumes too readily that the killing of Polonius is a "crime" and a "guilty deed" (p. 145), whereas the status of Hamlet's act must remain problematic simply because no clear view of it ever emerges at any point in the play. To see Hamlet as "a hero who in seeking to right a wrong commits one" (Jenkins p. 146) may satisfy the insatiable modern appetite for irony but at the cost of riding rough-shod over the unresolvable ambiguity of the arras episode and the undecidability of the attitudes towards it entertained by Gertrude, Claudius, the Danish people, Laertes and Hamlet himself. The imponderability of this episode is, I suggest, paradigmatic of the imponderability of *Hamlet* as a whole: anyone who does not find *Hamlet* confusing simply does not understand what is happening in the play.

NOTES

1. Fredson Bowers, "Dramatic Structure and Criticism: Plot in *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15, (Spring 1964), 213. It would be superfluous to multiply examples of this common assumption; however, it is worth adding that, as in Bowers, Hamlet's "mistake" in thinking it was the King he had killed is sometimes confused with the "mistake" of killing Polonius.
2. Philip Edwards (ed.), *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 54.
3. Harold Jenkins (ed.), *Hamlet* (London, 1982), p. 156. All textual referenced are to this edition of the play.
4. George Kittredge, *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (Boston, 1939), p. 238. Pointing to "the quickness and savagery of Hamlet's reactions when his own skin (moral or physical) is threatened," Salvador de Madariaga notes that the Queen's "jumpy" state affects her son "so that, when Polonius, behind the arras, repeats the cry of help, he thinks the King is behind, fears an instant danger, takes action and kills the old man." *On Hamlet* (London, 1948), p. 22.
5. Polonius's death is the least long-winded thing about him, and must rank among the most conveniently expeditious deaths in the entire Shakespeare canon.
6. Bowers (n.1 above), p. 210.
7. See Edwards (n. 2 above), p. 225. Though he annotates "rashness" at 5.2.6, Edwards doesn't do so for "rash" as used by Gertrude and Hamlet in the closet-scene.
8. "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," *PMLA* 70 (September 1955), p. 747. It is a pity that Bowers offers no suggestions as to how Hamlet is supposed to recognise this proper opportunity when it presents itself.
9. "Hamlet: Minister and Scourge," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29 (Winter 1979), 84.

10. Jenkins (n.3 above), pp. 329, 330.

11. Kittredge (n.4 above), pp. 246-247. A brief note by C.J. Sisson takes issue with those commentators who ascribe a reason for Hamlet's "punishment," and he wonders "for what sin or crime against Heaven Polonius is punished by Heaven through Hamlet's action. It is hardly enough that he was, in Hamlet's phrase, a 'rash, intruding fool.' And certainly there is no evidence of his complicity in the crimes of Claudius . . . . [Bowers' exegesis] assumes that Heaven's direction of events would contemplate the shedding of innocent blood as part of its plan" (*Shakespeare's Tragic Justice*, London, 1963, pp. 104-106.

12. 5.2.216-216. This allusion and similar ones in the same scene ("There's a divinity that shapes our ends" (10) and "Why, even in that was heaven ordinant" (48)) appear less as the much-vaunted change in Hamlet's attitude towards the heavenly powers than as a reiteration of an attitude already present in his response to Polonius's death. Horatio has already expressed the same fatalism: "Heaven will direct it" (1.4.91).

13. The Arden editor (n. 3 above) comments: "Not necessarily untrue because we have not seen it." But even if Hamlet had wept, would his tears have been for Polonius? For Laertes and Ophelia? For himself? (An obverse formulation might be equally applicable, or non-applicable, to Shakespearean drama: "Not necessarily true because we have seen (and heard) it."

14. Gertrude also fails to mention that Hamlet thought, or hoped, that it was claudius he had killed, that he had accused her of adultery and sexual bad taste, that he had called Claudius a murderer, a villain and a usurper, that Hamlet appeared to have seen the ghost of his father in his habit as he lived, that Hamlet thought this ghost had come to remind him of a "dread command" still not acted upon, that Hamlet recommended that she sleep alone from now on, that he admitted he was only pretending to be mad, that he had a surprise up his sleeve for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Gertrude's reticence is not surprising, but her egregious failure to put two and two together is.

15. Kittredge (n.4 above), p. 248. Cf. George MacDonald (ed.), *The Tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke* (London, 1905), p. 183: "He knows the thrust was meant for him, but he would not have it so understood; he too lays it to his madness, though he too knows better." Suspicion on Claudius's part is not enough for either of these crritics—it has to be total conviction.

16. Claudius is right to call the deed "heavy" and "bloody"—but why "vile" if Hamlet "in his lawless fit" cannot be held responsible for this action?

17. "This proclamation of Laertes against a reigning monarch is in defiance of all precedent." Jenkins (n.3 above), p. 354. It is the rabble, not Laertes, which makes this proclamation. (Could there be a connection between the rabble supporting Laertes and "the people muddied" of 4.5. 81?)

18. Gertrude is fully aware of Laertes's revengeful mood and intentions, as indicated here and later after the appearance of Ophelia in her madness, which draws from him the following exclamation: Hadst thou thy wits and didst persuade revenge,/It could not move thus." (4.5.167-168). After Laertes has been told of his sister's drowning the King says to her: "How much I had to do to calm his rage. Now fear I this will give it start again" (4.7.191-192). Despite these warnings, it is odd that Gertrude does not alert her son, after his return from England, to the danger he is facing.

19. This arbitration never seems to take place, at least not in the brief interval (i.e. scene 6) separating this encounter between Claudius and Laertes and the next (scene 7).

20. Note that "these feats" refers to the alleged attempts on the King's life, not to Hamlet's killing of Polonius.

21. Hamlet's popularity has been a stumbling-block for Claudius before (see 4.3.3-7). If Hamlet was so popular, we might wonder, why was there no wave of protest when Hamlet was passed over for the throne (or when he was sent to England), and why did Hamlet not think of exploiting his popularity as a means of deposing the man he regarded as a usurper and thus carrying out his revenge? The Ghost's "Howsomever thou pursuest this act" (1.5.84) can mean one of two things: 1. Kill Claudius, or hire assassins to kill him, in any way you choose, or 2. Avenge me in any way you choose (e.g. deposition, or even castration, which would certainly prevent "the royal bed of Denmark" from remaining "a couch for luxury and damned incest"). But Hamlet perceives no alternative but killing Claudius, and, as a provisional half-measure, prescribing sexual abstinence for his mother.

22. 1.2.75-78. Edwards (n.2 above) is a notable exception: "'My cause' cannot mean his vengeance, because it is clear that . . . he simply does not recognise himself as a proposed victim of Laertes' revenge. Presumably he cannot equate his accidental killing of Polonius with the premeditated murder of his father" (p. 229). Macdonald (n.15 above, p. 253) quotes the parallel passage in Q1: "beleeue mee, it greeues mee much *Horatio*, / That to *Laertes* I forgot my selfe: / For by my selfe me thinkes I feele his griefe, / Though there's a difference in each others wrong."

23 3.4.126 and 5.2.344 respectively. Jonathan Baldo, in "'His form and cause conjoin'd': Reflections on 'Cause' in *Hamlet*," *Renaissance Drama* New Series 16 (1985), 75-94, reflects on every single example of the word "cause" in the play except the problematic one now under consideration.

24. This lack of specificity marks Hamlet's remark to Ophelia, "I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me (3.1.123-124) as well as his father's "foul crimes" (1.5.12), "imperfections" (1.5.79) and "crimes" (3.3.81).

25. "Note G: Hamlet's Apology to Laertes," in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, 1904).

26. 5.2.334-337. Noting especially the phrase "my father's death" Jenkins (n.3 above) refers the reader to Hamlet's lines on "the image of my cause" (77-78), and to his apology and Laertes' response (222-249) as if the phrase is adducible as evidence of his interpretation of those passages.

27. There is, not surprisingly, no consensus among editors of *Hamlet* about Horatio's catalogue of disaster. Kittredge (n.4 above) thinks "accidental judgements" is equivalent to "casual slaughters," and gives the deaths of the Queen and Laertes as examples, not mentioning Polonius at all; Martz (1970) also thinks the phrases are synonymous, but thinks they apply to the deaths of Polonius and Ophelia. Among editors who distinguish the two phrases, Wilson thinks that "casual slaughters" refers to Polonius, Macdonald that it refers to Polonius, Ophelia and the Queen. Noting that Horatio's lines constitute, in effect, "a resume of the play's action", Hibbard refrains, probably wisely, from seeking to identify each individual crime and each individual victim.

Modern Recordings of *Hamlet* in English

GLEN D. HUNTER

Eerie music plays. Wordless voices sing discordantly. An apparent whirlwind storms in, then whisks away. Drums pound relentlessly. Then, in slightly lowered tones, an obvious gentleman discloses, "The king of Denmark has died mysteriously. His brother, Claudius, has seized the throne from Hamlet, the rightful heir, and married the widowed queen, Gertrude." Next, trumpets unite in fanfare and bells chime in celebration. A scant half-minute later the resonant voice of Sir Michael Redgrave mutters, "A little more than kin, and less than kind."

Thus are we introduced to the 1961 single-disc recording of *Hamlet* in the Living Shakespeare series, one of the nine commercially mass-produced modern recordings of the play in English with which, in addition to a videocassette recording of the BBC production as presented on American television in 1980, this study will be concerned.[1] The other recordings include the two-disc set of the Theatre Guild on the Air production issued in 1953 as RCA Victor LM-6007;[2] the four-disc set of the Old Vic Company production issued in 1957 as RCA Victor LM-6404; the two-disc set of the Baylor (Texas) University production issued in 1958 as Word W 6002/3; the single-disc version by the Dublin Gate Theatre issued in 1960 as Spoken Arts SA 781; the five-disc set by The Marlowe Dramatic Society and Professional Players issued in 1961 as Argo (Stereo) ZPR 192-6; the four-disc set produced for The Shakespeare Recording Society by Caedmon Records Inc. and issued in 1963 as SRS 232 (compatible stereo); the four-disc set of the original Broadway cast recording issued in 1964 as Columbia DOL-302 (monaural) and DOS-702 (stereo); and the two-disc set of the Hallmark Hall of Fame television production issued in 1970 as RCA VDM-119 (mono).[3] To afford readers a better basis for comparison of their views with mine, I have arbitrarily chosen to include the recent BBC version as well.

The Living Shakespeare recording of *Hamlet* serves as a worthy point of departure for this article, for within seconds it introduces listeners to a number of features common to modern recordings of Shakespearean plays: music, sound effects, narration, and readers who are stars of the stage, motion pictures, and television. In general, the incidence of the first three increases in proportion to the extent to which the recording represents an abridged version of the play. "Sound effects are employed for realism [and] for atmosphere, and . . . music . . . to mark transitions."[4]

I

The first modern recording of *Hamlet* in English documents Sir John Gielgud's radio adaptation, which was originally performed by the Broadway Cast for broadcast in the United States on March 4, 1951. Directed by Homer Fickett, the production—featuring Gielgud as Hamlet and costarring Dorothy McGuire as Ophelia and Pamela Brown as Gertrude—definitely amounts to a vehicle for its star, for though the other members of the cast are never less than good, they make virtually no individual impression. One critical response to this recording was as follows:

> As a broadcast [this presentation] was extremely effective, [but] on [discs it] sounds choppy and a little hammy. Gielgud's never-varied hollow vibrato becomes especially wearing. However, there are some very clever editing devices, such as making Horatio an interim narrator, and the pacing is good. Shakespeare-devotees, it can be promised, won't like the set.[5]

Purists will indeed find much to deplore in this first modern recording of *Hamlet* in English. Gielgud's shockingly patriarchal voice makes his Hamlet sound, on the one hand, considerably older than his parents but, on the other, not nearly forceful enough to match Laertes at Ophelia's grave. The appropriateness of some of the sound effects and narration is suspect, and the music (touted on the record labels as having been "specially composed and conducted") unimpressive. Both the "What piece of work is a man" passage and the "How all occasions do inform against me" soliloquy are omitted altogether. In the second half of the production, ostensibly to keep the radio audience from becoming bored, the readers tend to over dramatize, Gielgud included (for instance, saying his lines during the play within the play so fast and with such fury that they become indistinct). Then, too, "certain dialogue differs from the original . . . since [this adaptation] deletes several characters whose roles are supplementary to the dramatic line of the play."[6] Thus, the king now says "And can you, Gertrude, by no drift of circumstance get from him why he puts on this confusion?"; the queen says "This night he hath beseeched your Majesty to see and hear the Players that have come to court";

and Polonius says "I have closely sent for Hamlet hither, that he, as 'twere by accident, may here affront Ophelia." Some of the lines crop up in strange new places: before instructing the players, Hamlet says "For if the King like not the comedy, why then, belike he likes it not, perdie!"; after Claudius admonishes Hamlet for mourning past prescribed limits, Polonius injects "Fore God, my lord, well spoken!"; and in response to Hamlet's "We are arrant knaves all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery," Polonius asks the king, from behind the tapestry, "Do you mark that, my lord?" There are also quasi-Shakespearean and spurious lines, but the worst offenses akin to these are such speech-sequence travesties (necessitated by cut-and-paste editing to fit the presentation, with commercials, into a two-hour broadcast time frame) as Hamlet's "These tedious old fools! Shall I now to the Court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason. O God, I have bad dreams! But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived" and Ophelia's "Alack, and fie for shame! Young men will do it, for tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day."

The saving graces of the recording of Gielgud's radio adaptation of *Hamlet* are its exceptional clarity (the result of close miking) and his masterful, impassioned readings of the (uncut) "sullied flesh" and "what a rogue and peasant slave am I" soliloquies (of which the former would be hard to improve upon). As a tribute to this recording's serviceability, the record album remains in print for over twenty years.

II

In Gielgud's next interpretation of *Hamlet* to be documented on records, done by the Old Vic Company, he achieved a meticulously controlled corrective. Casting himself as Hamlet and coproducing the recording (with John Richmond), Gielgud took no liberties and yet at the same time took full advantage of the opportunity to make a full-length studio recording. Supported by an entirely new cast, he evidently took pains to get everything right down to the smallest detail, for the sound effects are the very soul of discretion (including the lute to which the insane Ophelia sings) and the narration, empathetically helping the listener to get his bearings and visualize what he cannot see, simply the best yet committed to records, as may be gauged from this introduction to Act 1, Scene 2:

> Claudius, the new king of Denmark, the late king's brother, is about to hold a state council. The councillors, headed by Polonius, are in their robes, and behind them are the courtiers, in full court dress, among them Polonius' son, Laertes. Sitting a little apart and dressed in plain black is Hamlet, the late king's son. His claim to the succession has been

> overridden, and he is not a member of the council. The king enters, with his newly married queen, Gertrude, his brother's widow. [Trumpet fanfare.] They take their places, and the king prepares to address the council.

Some credit for the excellence of the narration must go to the narrator himself, John Rye, who sounds remarkably like a younger Gielgud.

The original critical response to this second modern recording of *Hamlet* in English was as follows:

> For over twenty years Sir John [Gielgud] has been studying and reinterpreting [the part of Hamlet], and his reading here is that of one who has long since made his discoveries of the role. An older and more mature Hamlet than that he presented in the 1930s, this latest version, characterized by subtle psychological brilliance and complete technical control, would appear to be the great actor's final statement of the melancholy Dane. It is a gemlike performance, but one which through the years has become almost too finely polished, too urbane, too perfect, at times leaving one longing for the febrile, neurotic interpretation of 1936.
>
> Yet what this performance lacks in fire is compensated for by the masterly rationale of the present interpretation, the clarity of diction, and the disciplined control of the supporting company. . . . The over-all tone is subdued, restrained, lacking in surprise and novelty. To listen to this classic and traditional version of Shakespeare's masterpiece imposes no strain on the auditor; and perhaps it is this very sense of familiarity which the excellent cast evokes in its listeners that is the key to its producers' intentions.
>
> . . . Sir John and the Old Vic Company indeed come close to perfection in [this] recording. . . .[7]

It seems almost immaterial to point out that in this recording the fidelity is so low (the volume must be turned way up for students to hear it well in a classroom) that, when the ghost appears, the mortals do not seem genuinely terrified; that the ghost sounds old but not pathetic; that Polonius sounds mature, not old, and not really comical; that Gertrude, when being lectured by Hamlet in the closet scene, hardly seems agitated; or that Yvonne Mitchell's affectedly thin and nasal voice seems far too old for the part of Ophelia—for this is a recording that all lovers of *Hamlet* owe it to themselves to hear. Paul Rogers' performance of Claudius is simply superb, the best I have encountered, with a constant bite to his tone that enables him at once to be both dignified and evil. And even if Gielgud sounds ancient, no one more convincingly sounds the predominant note of world-weariness in Hamlet's first soliloquy. When Giellgud delivers the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy here, it is as if Shakespeare's most eloquent word-music meets its ideal, most masterful interpreter. Notwithstanding the fact that Gielgud's version of this soliloquy for his "Ages of Man" recording[8] is very good, the reading here is truly incomparable, with a perfect pace and an air of finality about it that bespeak the greatness that artistry dreams of. The distant miking technique helps produce an other-worldly effect that practically makes the listener's hair stand on end and renders continuation of the play almost disrespectful. In my judgment, this is one moment in spoken word recordings that needs to be preserved for all time.

III

The third modern recording of *Hamlet* in English, that of the Baylor University Theatre production, documents an experimental version of a sort of which I essentially disapprove. Nevertheless, to give it its due, I cite the critical assessment it prompted:

> The text of this production . . . has been handled with a vengeance on the part of the adapters. They have edited, shifted, and ruthlessly arranged the speeches with a new design in mind. One might well call this the schizophrenic *Hamlet*. Three actors each are required to play the roles of Hamlet, Polonius, Ophelia, Claudius and Gertrude—fortunately the album includes the altered text—and the whole effect is that of a choral reading. The voices of the young actors are well orchestrated, and the abstract sounds in the background dramatize the mood and pace of the individual scenes. The tri-character concept brings alive the speeches in a dimensional manner, and lines repeated for highlight effect sometimes convey a startlingly new impact. Especially effective and creative are the "Get thee to a nunnery" scene between Hamlet and Ophelia and the tripartite treatment of the great soliloquies. I particularly like the "To be or not to be" reading.
>
> Many subtleties are, however, lost in this version. Lines which have such agonizing intimacy when spoken in the darkness of the theater by a single actor now are made almost public in their emotion. The jumps in the scenes presuppose a solid knowledge of the text on the part of the listener, and the average auditor may well be left in puzzlement. Several times I confess I felt [disoriented] as I listened. Yet throughout the recording an exciting sense of theatricality prevails in this refreshingly courageous experiment in stage-craft and dramatic technique.[9]

IV

Although the Dublin Gate Theatre series of Shakespeare recordings for the Spoken Arts label has been praised as a "real treasure-trove," "almost consistently magnificent," and its principal actors, Micheál MacLiammóir and Hilton Edwards, as "great and astonishingly versatile artists,"[10] I am not won over by their version of *Hamlet*, which constitutes the play's fourth modern recording in English. I find it artificial, and I am continuously mindful of readers reciting lines; I nearly never feel that the action of the play is unfolding in my presence as I listen.

Directed by Edwards, the Dublin Gate Theatre *Hamlet* features MacLiammóir as Hamlet, with Edwards doubling as Claudius and the ghost; Nancy Manningham playing Gertrude; Maureen Toal, Ophelia; and Christopher Casson doubling as Polonius and the first player. To MacLiammóir's credit, he never gets out of control or hard to understand; however, in the first soliloquy he does not allow Hamlet to seem deeply distressed, and he does not seem conscious of the ghost's sinister supernatural quality when it appears. MacLiammóir's "O curséd spite" lines come across as somewhat affected and melodramatic, and, relying too much on rhetorical effects, he delivers the "What is he whose grief bears such an emphasis?" speech as calmly as if he were doing "To be, or not to be." He does the latter effectively and in its entirety; builds to a nice crescendo, beginning with "or ere this I should ha'fatted all the region kites," in his Hecuba soliloquy; and is also properly grave in his "witching time of night" speech. His worst moment comes when the ghost reappears "to whet [Hamlet's] almost blunted purpose" and the background music becomes far too obtrusive (as it also is when accompanying the breakup of the play within the play); he seems to try to sing it, and does it poorly. Then, rather unrealistically, he and the ghost chant their lines to one another.

Whereas Edwards has next to nothing to say as Claudius, Manningham as Gertrude has a good deal to say that is not said well. When Hamlet makes Gertrude fear for her life in the closet scene, she becomes too emotional and does not deliver her lines clearly; then when Hamlet says "My father, in his habit, as he lived," she screams, which seems a bit much. Furthermore, when relaying the news of Ophelia's death, she doesn't really seem heartbroken.

I find the ghost's revelation the most impressive feature in the first half of the recording of the Dublin Gate Theatre's version of *Hamlet*, but that is done far better elsewhere; it also seems to me that the quality of the second half goes downhill. Still, the recording does appear to achieve the goals spelled out for it in the album's liner notes:

To meet the requirements of a fifty-minute recording omissions are inevitable. Even so, a choice remains between preserving selected scenes intact, leaving no time to cover the whole play, or, abbreviating the scenes to permit as many as possible to be performed. Believing it to be more generally acceptable the latter choice has been made; so, in [this recording], the [plot] of the [play is] entire. The object of [this adaptation] is to introduce the heart of the [play] to those who may never have come into contract with [it]. It is hoped that [this version] may arouse a curiosity to explore the [play] in [its] entirety. So [its] aim is twofold: to provide an exciting hour in [itself] and to lure the listener to discover the treasure that awaits him at every step of the road on a longer adventure.

V

The fifth modern recording of *Hamlet* in English, the 1961 Living Shakespeare version, originally appeared in a multi-record set but was shortly afterward issued separately. Besides Sir Michael Redgrave as Hamlet, the cast for this recording features John Phillips as Claudius, Margaret Rawlings as Gertrude, Derek Francis as Polonius, and Barbara Jefford as Ophelia. Almost without exception, the strengths of this version come from unexpected sources. How marvelous, for once (albeit ever so briefly), to hear Lucianus sounding properly sinister (rolling his “r’s” delectably, as in the last syllable of “thou mixture rank”)! How gratifying to hear Laertes appropriately incensed after his return from France (”The devil take thy soul!” is probably the most impassioned line in this performance). Priceless, too, is Margaret Rawlings’ almost comic valedictory rendering of “the drink, the drink,” as if someone were actually standing on her stomach at that time. I also find the Elizabethan-style lute music used as a backdrop for the announcement of the players’ arrival, Hamlet’s advice to them, and the play within the play itself quite appealing.

Not surprisingly, nearly half (47%) of the lines in the Living Shakespeare *Hamlet* are spoken by Redgrave (even so, since eight lines have been removed from the “To be, or not to be” soliloquy and the “antic disposition” speech is missing entirely, the recording does not seem intended merely to showcase his talents), but there is no fire in his voice; his reading seems much too controlled. When alone with first Ophelia and then the queen, Redgrave’s Hamlet is more dispassionate than not—and, certainly in response, so are they. He delivers the “To be, or not to be” speech rather blandly, and in the nunnery scene becomes properly overwrought but twice—when he says “monsters” and "the rest shall keep as they are." When Hamlet confronts Gertrude in her closet, Redgrave becomes aroused quite belatedly, barely in time for the arrival of the ghost. Curiously, he delivers both "It hath made me mad" and "I must be cruel only to be kind" with great sensitivity, for immediately before making these remarks his character has seemed neither mad nor cruel. He finally gets relatively stirred up in his challenge to Laertes at Ophelia's graveside and closes on an impressively majestic note, interpreting "The rest [PAUSE] is [PAUSE] silence."

Though there is not a single poor performance in the Living Shakespeare *Hamlet*, there are few moments of genuine interpretive distinction and fewer sharp characterizations. Its Claudius and Polonius come across as adequate but no more, its Ophelia offers a most appealing voice but does not pass the test of the insanity scene, and its Gertrude speaks too deliberately and thereby seems affected, though this trait serves her well when reporting Ophelia's death.

The undoing of the Living Shakespeare *Hamlet* is its virtually inescapable background noise, in the form of obtrusive music (played, unforgivably, throughout even Hamlet's first and "To be, or not to be" soliloquies), sound effects, and the talk of extras—ironically the very feature on which the name of the series of recordings seems to be based. When Polonius bids farewell to Laertes, we hear the waves slapping against the boat and sea birds screeching. When the ghost makes his revelation, water drips constantly in the background, and an echo effect is employed to stress the words "revenge," "murder," "foul," "strange," and "swear," with reverberation galore playing up "revenge." When Marcellus and Bernardo come to rejoin Hamlet after his rendezvous with the ghost, they sound as if they are running on a wooden ramp. More discordant, wordless singing introduces the traditional Act 2, Scene 2. Laughter, heartbeat-simulating drums, and gong sounds underscore the arrival of the players and their preparation for the play within the play. When the king rises abruptly to bring the presentation of *The Murder of Gonzago* to a halt, we hear his empty tankard clattering to the floor. We hear Hamlet draw his sword both before considering killing the king when the latter is attempting to pray and on telling the queen that she may not go until he shows her the inmost part of herself. Just before Polonius is killed, background noise renders the words "How now? A rat?" nearly inaudible. The background sound effect of dripping water returns for the announcement of Ophelia's drowning. Drumbeats provide the backdrop for Ophelia's funeral. And though the sound of the swordplay at the play's end is as fitting as it is convincingly realistic, the audience to the duel perhaps overdoes the oohing and aahing, and as Hamlet indicates that he is killing the king, background music obtrudes far too much yet again.

My objection to the absence of desirable dialogue-framing silence has been expressed in even stronger terms:

> The "dram of eale" in the Living Shakespeare [series of recordings] is the music. The . . . musical director not only offends with supremely cacophonous and altogether unsuitable prologues and transitions, but he has insisted upon employing his non-music, married to excruciating sound effects, as background to the action itself. . . . [There is not a single] sensible sound effect in [this whole version of *Hamlet*].[11]

One thing for sure: by the time the queen asks "Alack, what noise is this?" (when Laertes returns with a mob of followers), in this version it strikes the listener as marvelously apt.

VI

The sixth modern recording of *Hamlet* in English, interpreted by The Marlowe Dramatic Society and Professional Players, has much to recommend it. The scene divisions visible on the records for the first time are a big help in classroom use. The performance is uncut and employs the classic New Shakespeare text edited by Dover Wilson. This is the only recorded performance in English to date to be directed by a former editor of the play—George Rylands, editor of The New Clarendon Shakespeare *Hamlet*. This is also the only full-length modern recording of the play in English to be spread out over as many as five discs, and the resultant clarity and presence are exemplary. Moreover, somewhat surprisingly, this is the only modern recording of *Hamlet* in English in which the stage directions for the dumb show are read.

Performances in The Marlowe Society's *Hamlet* are, on the whole, very good. Patrick Wymark is certainly a strong Claudius, and Margaretta Scott gives a complementarily fine performance as Gertrude. Jeanette Sterke's voice is perfect for the part of Ophelia, whose youthful vulnerability is nowhere better conveyed. However, listeners subscribing to the belief that

> ghosts, to the Elizabethan . . . were faint, weak, shadowy things, [and] the actual spirits of the dead had no strength muscle or voice [—a belief that] Shakespeare . . . echoed . . . when he made Horatio speak of the sheeted dead squeaking and gibbering in the streets of Rome . . .; [thus, the ghost of Hamlet's father should speak] in a high, penetrating tone . . . [and not] with impressive vocal resonance . . .[12]

will be disappointed to learn that the ghost as portrayed here by William Devlin has a powerful, deep voice. Moreover, to me the gravediggers don't sound rustic enough, and the priest at Ophelia's funeral sounds altogether too affected. Director Rylands himself gives a fine, emphatically effeminate performance as Osric (sounding exactly like Tony Curtis's female impersonation in the Marilyn Monroe movie *Some Like It Hot*), but the acting highlight of this version, without question, is Miles Malleson's absolutely brilliant portrayal of Polonius. This is not a case of someone *acting* the part—rather, this seems the very epitome of Shakespeare's conception of the character, a doddering old man, pathetically and comically past his prime but thankfully not too far beyond the threshold of senility. So good is Malleson that he immediately picks up every scene in which he appears, showing a basically goodhearted, hard-to-dislike human being, which makes us swallow his "precepts" willingly and regret his unfortunate end all the more. When Malleson adds little touches like clearing his throat, laughing, or rolling his "r's," the additions seem beautifully in character.

There are two definite weaknesses in The Marlowe Players' recorded version of *Hamlet:* first, inappropriate background music (trumpet fanfare at the beginning of the first scene and pastoral music whenever the ghost appears, including the closet scene), and second, the casting of Anthony White as Hamlet. White's vocal quality seems unfailingly unctuous, gloating, and bland, vitiating every scene in which he appears. He simply cannot project turbulence. The fact that this is a very desirable recording despite these weaknesses should serve to call attention to the magnitude of its strengths.

VII

I find much both to commend and to condemn about the seventh modern recording of *Hamlet* in English. The Shakespeare Recording Society's entry featuring Paul Scofield as Hamlet. On the positive side, this recording is currently the only one in English which furnishes a complete text—namely, that of the Penguin Shakespeare, edited for the Society by G.B. Harrison, which steadfastly favors First Folio passages over those of the Second Quarto, even going so far as to enclose in brackets those passages in the Quarto that are not printed in the Folio. Directed by Howard Sackler, The Shakespeare Recording Society version definitely offers the best combination of sound effects and background music of all the modern recordings of *Hamlet* in English (its closest rival in that respect, the Old Vic Company's version, features the best sound effects but eschews background music); as a matter of fact, this quality accounts for The Shakespeare Recording Society set's outstanding achievement—the use of both sound effects (the sea waves) and music (undulating orchestral chords) to underscore the ghost's slow and solemn revelation (the waves are heard throughout scenes like the first one which take place out of doors and beside the sea, and the undulating orchestral chords are heard whenever the ghost appears, including the first scene). Actually, Wilfrid Lawson's tour de force characterization of the ghost would not be possible in the theater, for the pace of his disclosure is so deliberate that it requires fully nine and a half minutes, which would be disproportionately long for an uncut stage performance. Lawson wonderfully brings out unsuspected nuances of his lines, particularly poignancy and pathos. Thus, modern technology definitely improves this Shakespeare Recording Society interpretation, which is something that can be said for few others.

After repeated listening to The Shakespeare Recording Society's version, I find that I prefer that set's Horatio, portrayed by Edward de Sousa, to all others. De Sousa has a crisp vocal quality that seems ideal for a sharp-witted scholar, and his handling of the role is impeccable.

Plaudits are also due The Shakespeare Recording Society version for having the king pray semiaudibly while Hamlet weighs the pros and cons of killing him. This technique proves extremely effective.

I have two real problems with The Shakespeare Recording Society's interpretation of *Hamlet*. The first is with Donald Houston's portrayal of Laertes, the most agitated among modern recordings in English—so much so, even, that he is unintelligible in Ophelia's funeral scene. The other is with Scofield. For one thing, I find his voice downright lugubrious. For another, his manner of speaking is slow and deliberate, even when he is supposedly aroused, and although the clarity gained as a result has merit, I cannot equate a consistently low-keyed and rather retarded-sounding speaker with Shakespeare's Hamlet who produces one mind-boggling verbal sally after another. Realizing that Scofield's stage performances have been highly praised, however, I will add in fairness that anyone who readily thinks of Hamlet as the melancholy Dane should be very content with this recording.

VIII

The eighth modern recording of *Hamlet* in English, and the last full-length one to be made available on records, is one of the wonders of the world of spoken word recordings. In this, the 1964 Broadway cast recording, what Sir John Gielgud could not accomplish as lead actor and coproducer in previous versions, he accomplishes brilliantly as director. Throughout the performance, which truly amounts to a coming out of stars, the actors—including Richard Burton as Hamlet, Alfred Drake as Claudius, Eileen Herlie as Gertrude, Hume Cronyn as Polonius, Linda Marsh as Ophelia, John Cullum as Laertes, Robert Milli as Horatio, and Sir John himself as the ghost—respond to one another beautifully, and in so doing achieve a naturalness not approached by other recordings. As I listened to the records' eight sides in quick succession, I was amazed at how few are the lines that do not seem interpreted about as well as possible—which is, of course, a tribute to the cast but to Gielgud in particular.

When the film counterpart of Gielgud's Broadway production of *Hamlet* first ran in theatres, I saw it and was keenly disappointed. Virtually no one looked the part, and modern rehearsal dress did not help. But on records it's another story. The sound effects and background music are realistic and welcome, and as far as performances are concerned, Burton's Hamlet is far and away the most multidimensional on records among modern versions in English, and Gielgud's ghost and the characterizations of Drake, Herlie, and Cronyn are practically in a class by themselves. What could not have been anticipated, however, is the virtuoso performance of the play's one previously unmastered part—namely, that of the insane Ophelia. Because the progress of this production has fortunately been documented, it is possible to explain this miracle:

> [After nearly three months of rehearsals and performances,] Gielgud held a two-hour session along with. . . . Marsh, working on the mad scene. These were some of his comments to her: "Give an imperious command to your first line, 'Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?' . . . The entrance must be striking. Put in sudden stops and abrupt changes of mood throughout the scene. Not sad and sentimental. Be open and [childlike] when you sing "at his heels a stone," and then be cross and furious when you say "Pray you, mark!" Ophelia is all alone in her own world. Give a tragic overtone to "Lord, we know what we are," then suddenly come back to yourself on "we know not what we may be." It all has an illogicality. There is no justification for what she blurts out, and it comes in a stream like a drunken person. . . . When Laertes comes in, . . . nothing interests you. Nothing has love or charm. Nothing matters or is worth living for. Show us a hollowness—a hopelessness. She has no wishes by the end of the scene. Perhaps she had some on her first entrance, but by the second . . . none.[13]

The amazing thing about Linda Marsh's achievement is how well she continually shifts emotional gears. Although her full and somewhat boyish voice is not ideal for the first part of the play, these qualities work very nicely in the insanity scene, and she carries out Gielgud's suggestions to perfection. The only drawback is her saying "which to the grave did go" instead of the (negative) variant, which is more in keeping (4.5.38) with the dramatic purpose of the scene as a whole and the moment in which it occurs.

The 1964 original Broadway cast recording of *Hamlet* has two liabilities: because of staging constraints it is not uncut, and though Burton is generally very good, there are quite a few lines in which he seems unnatural. At times he appears to have become a bit bored and to have started playing with the part somewhat—assuming an antic disposition, as it were. He shows a tendency to pause before words he wants to emphasize, especially in the second half of the play, as in "Now might I do it [PAUSE] pat!"; "who was in life a foolish, prating [PAUSE] knave"; "a thing of no [PAUSE] thing"; "A certain convocation of politic worms are e'en [PAUSE] at him"; "Nothing [PAUSE] but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar"; "Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats will not debate the question of this [PAUSE] straw"; when asking for Yorick's skull, "Let me [PAUSE] see"; and "If [I lose the fencing match], I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd [PAUSE] hits." The same detached or flippant attitude exhibited in these instances is reflected in the observation that in Denmark one may smile and smile and still be a villain. But in a half-dozen cases Burton strikes me as a blatant grandstander. With a long pause between syllables, to show disgust, he says "For Hec [PAUSE] u [PAUSE] ba!" Then, inprobably his most celebrated bit of "business," he reads "*(A long, loud descending glissando)* Aaaaaahhhh *(Tearfully, almost inaudibly)* vengeance."[14] With similar affectation he reads "give [the recorder] *(Trilling the R)* brrrrreath with your mouth"; "that his heels may *[Inflecting upwardly]* KICK at heaven"; "first mouthed, to be last *(Gulps)* swallowed"; "it is but squeezing you, and, *(Inflecting the word up and down)* SPONNNGE, you shall be dry again"; and "if you find him not within this month, you shall *(Sniffs)* NOSE him, as you go up the stairs into the lobby."[15] These moments of "cuteness" may appeal to many, but to me they detract from an otherwise marvelous interpretation in which Burton admirably responds to personal setbacks with moving agony and thinks on his feet with incredibly quick intelligence, excelling even Gielgud in these respects.

As dominant an actor as Burton is, it should not go without saying that Eileen Herlie's portrayal of Gertrude, and George Rose and Hugh Alexander's handling of the exchange between the gravediggers, are the best on records in modern versions in English. Cronyn's highly praised performance renders Polonius as a mature but not old, quintessentially self-serving businessman.

IX

If there were a contest among modern recordings of *Hamlet* in English to determine which one represented the greatest expenditure of vocal energy, the 1970 recording of the Hallmark Hall of Fame television production, the last in English to become available on records, would unquestionably win hands down. The guard's challenge at the very beginning seems a form of jumping down his reliever's throat, and Horatio's "Stay, illusion!," which soon follows, sounds as desperate as desperate gets. Throughout this interpretation, there is, if anything, too much emotion, too much forcefulness in the delivery of the lines.

Though the Hamlet portrayed by Richard Chamberlain in this Hallmark Hall of Fame version has occasional moments of controlled sobriety (the speech ending "I shall not look upon his like again," the meditation on whether to kill the evidently prayerful king, the properly sad and affecting exchange with Horatio about Yorick, and the speech including "the readiness is all") and healthy jocularity (when Hamlet admits envying Horatio's equanimity and when Hamlet engages in repartee with the sexton), Hamlet's personality is basically vitriolic and volatile. Seemingly taking his cue from the Hecuba soliloquy, Chamberlain gives, in this Hamlet, the antithesis of Horatio—that is, "passion's slave" in his own estimaation, either being petulant or angry at nearly every juncture. He is properly sarcastic when he says "Thrift, thrift, Horatio"; he actually screams "My fate cries out"; he is properly impassioned when he says "O most pernicious woman!" and "smiling, damned villain!"; he really spews venom when saying "These tedious old fools!"; in his explanation to Horatio and the soldiers, his words are indeed "wild and whirling"; when this Hamlet says he has lost all his mirth, we believe him implicitly; in the Hecuba soliloquy, he peaks emotionally at "cue for passion" and "He would drown the stage with tears and cleave the general ear with horrid speech" and then really explodes, becoming almost unintelligible at "O vengeance!," truly unpacking his heart "like a very drab," the culmination being "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king!"—which he actually yells. In the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, he bites hard into the words "shocks," "perchance," "whips and scorns," "bodkin," and "action." His "Ha, ha! Are you honest?" is another real explosion. He truly seems to go insane in the nunnery scene. After *The Murder of Gonzago* is staged, his response to Guildenstern is indeed "in no frame," and Hamlet next answers Guildenstern with complete disgust, snapping "Leave me, friends!" to signify sarcastically that they are anything but friends. After getting very worked up in saying "would it were not so, you are my mother," he overdramatizes "Dead for a ducat, dead!" His goodbye to Polonius, in which with strong emphasis the prince calls the just-departed lord chamberlain a fool, is totally unsympathetic. He says "a king of shreds and patches" so caustically that it sounds more like "badges." He revels in saying "Hide fox, and all after," after which he runs off playfully. He also delights in telling the king to go to hell in order to look for Polonius. As an international taunt he says "Farewell, dear mother" directly to the king—in fact, Hamlet's throwing Claudius a kiss at this point so infuriates the latter that it leads naturally into "like the hectic in my blood he rages." Finally, peculiarly, Chamberlain elects to laugh during the pause as he says "The rest is [PAUSE] silence."

As far as the other performers in this Hallmark Hall of Fame version besides Chamberlain are concerned, Richard Johnson's Claudius seems impressive on first acquaintance, but, on closer examination, less so, and Margaret Leighton's Gertrude certainly seems satisfactory, though without uniquely admirable qualities. Sir Michael Redgrave as Polonius comes across as one-dimensional and dull. Ciaran Madden's Ophelia speaks so slowly and distinctly that, despite seeming goodhearted, she appears too shallow or slow-witted to be an ideal match for this Hamlet.

The pace in this 1970 recording of *Hamlet* is rather frenetic. Even Gielgud's revelation as the ghost is done at so rushed a clip that it is not especially effective. On the other hand, among modern versions in English, the Osric in this interpretation seems the best on records, and the sexton is also outstanding, although (because of the compromises that abridged versions necessitate) unfortunately deprived of his assistant.

As an original soundtrack, the 1970 recording of *Hamlet* presents some problems, in that nothing has been done to adapt the program specifically for listening. Consequently, there is just over a minute of uninterrupted background music while the film credits are being shown and two minutes of the same while the dumb show is being watched. However, since this set features no narration, the listener is at a complete loss to know what is happening during these and similar stretches.

The background music in the recording of the 1970 Hallmark Hall of Fame TV presentation is both an asset and a liability. On the positive side, one recurring pastoral motif (reminiscent of the orchestral music of Ravel) is both appropriate and impressive. It beautifully establishes the mood for both discussions with Ophelia in Act 1, Scene 3, is used to introduce Hamlet's arrival for the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, and reappears in somewhat altered form when the queen announces Ophelia's death. The festive music which accompanies the arrival of the actors and the incidental music for the dumb show are also perfectly acceptable, as is the mysterious music which follows Hamlet's question "Where's your father?" to set up the drama of Ophelia's reply. On the negative side, all of the choral music seems incongruous. Occurring first to accompany the presentation of the film credits, it soon obtrudes as Claudius explains the difficulty with Fortinbras and shortly afterward denies Chamberlain the chance to deliver the first soliloquy in silence. It occurs one last time to accompany the funeral procession of Ophelia. Ironically, one of the most effective scenes in this version, the one with "O, my offense is rank," is marvelously introspective, largely because of the conspicuous absence of the music.

There are some fabricated lines in the recording of the Hallmark Hall of Fame version of *Hamlet*, such as "therefore will we send forth ambassadors with strong complaint to old Fortinbras that he may check his nephew's purpose," but certainly not to the extent that they may be found in one-disc interpretations.

X

The latest recording of *Hamlet* in English, that of the 1980 BBC production, is crippled by a serious basic flaw. In *Hamlet* the highest of intelligence is involved throughout, in verbal jousting and parrying: Reynaldo and the sexton, for instance, provoke Polonius and Hamlet, respectively, into consternation at the difficulty in maintaining intellectual superiority befitting their rank, and even Ophelia and Gertrude are given lines clearly meant to reveal that they too are characters of intelligence. The BBC production of *Hamlet* fails, however, to convince that the characters are truly great and possess this high intelligence. In this play Hamlet and Claudius must emerge as antagonists worthy of one another because both have minds like steel traps. Toward this end Shakespeare shows Hamlet outdoing such a proficient euphuist as Osric in a matter of seconds. For any interpretation of *Hamlet* to be successful, Hamlet and Claudius must come across as exceptionally quick on their mental toes, but in this BBC production neither seems especially brainy. By contrast, the ones who come across as the most mentally alert in this production are Gertrude and Laertes, played better by Claire Bloom and David Robb, respectively, than I have seen either part played before. Lines in the play also clearly establish that Polonius has had his own day as an astute politician, but as played by Eric Porter in the BBC production, Polonius merely comes across as a pathetic busybody.

As has been pointed out by Bernice Kliman in an earlier issue of *Hamlet Studies* (Vol. 4, Summer and Winter 1982, pp. 102-103), the Horatio in the BBC production, played by Robert Swann, is so weak that he can only acquiesce to Hamlet, and the same may be said for its Ophelia, played by Lalla Ward, whom the article accurately assessed as "mousey," "insignificant," "weak-chinned," and "insipid" (p. 103).

As played by Derek Jacobi, the Hamlet in the BBC production does come alive in the second half, but by then the damage has already been done. As played by Patrick Stewart, its Claudius never seems a match for the likes of the king of England, Fortinbras, or even Laertes, who seems forced to follow Claudius' lead but fully capable of being equally Machiavellian.

Something should also be said here against the highly questionable practice, as in the BBC production, of having Hamlet and Gertrude simultaneously horizontal on the queen's bed during the closet scene white attempting to engage in dialogue.

XI

Reflecting on these ten recordings, I see little in one- and two- disc versions to compensate for their many shortcomings (some of Gielgud's readings of the soliloquies are unmatched, and only Chamberlain's performance shows how upset and angry the corruption in Denmark quite justifiably makes Hamlet). Frankly, I was surprised to encounter so many outstanding performances, and I now fervently hope that no real fancier of *Hamlet* will fail to gain firsthand familiarity with the portrayals of Hamlet by Gielgud, Burton, and Chamberlain; of Claudius by Paul Rogers and Alfred Drake; of Gertrude by Claire Bloom and Eileen Herlie; of Polónius by Miles Malleson and Hume Cronyn; of Ophelia by Linda Marsh and Jeanette Sterke (only in listening to these recordings did I realize how difficult the part of Ophelia is; actually, I have gradually come to think of it more as being three parts—one in which a young girl shines with the hope of unfulfilled dreams, a second in which she is having to cope with unforeseeable disappointments, and a third in which she is having to depict the unstable aspects of insanity induced by profound grief); and of the ghost by Wilfrid Lawson and Gielgud. It should come as no surprise that the most prominent figure in these recordings is Gielgud, the preeminent Hamlet of our time, and I can assure Sir John's fans that all the recordings in which he has participated document important aspects of the magnificence of his craft.

Finally, the question arises as to which of these recordings deserves to be considered the finest modern one in English to date. If I had to choose, though I would not want to be without the Old Vic Company's version, I would cast my vote, for its consistently excellent sound, extraordinary realism, and outstanding teamwork from an outstanding team, for the 1964 original Broadway cast recording of the Gielgud production. Since six modern recordings of *Hamlet* in English were issued between 1953 and 1963 and no full-length version on discs has followed that landmark 1964 recording, it clearly has posed a challenge that appears unanswerable.[16]

NOTES

1. By "modern recordings" I mean those made specifically for reproduction from long-playing 33 1/3 r.p.m. microgroove phonograph records. While earlier recordings of excerpts from *Hamlet* featuring the likes of John Barrymore and Sir Laurence Olivier have been transferred to LPs, I am not concerned with them here.

2. All recordings are identified as issued in the United States.

3. At last report RCA Victor LM-6404 had been reissued on two cassette tapes in 1981 by Listen for Pleasure Ltd. (111 Martin Ross Avenue, Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3J 2M1) and was available as LFP 7021; Spoken Arts 781 and its cassette tape counterpart SAC 8007 were available from Spoken Arts, Inc. (P.O. Box 289, New Rochelle, New York 10802); Argo (Stereo) ZPR 192-6 could be obtained from The Decca Record Company Limited (Argo Division, 115 Fulham Road, London, England S.W.3); and Columbia DOS-702 was available as Columbia Special Products CSP ADOS-702, as was a cassette tape of excerpts from this set, CSP PT-11768, from CBS Records (CBS Inc., 51 West 52d Street, New York, New York 10019, U.S.A.). The movie version of *Hamlet* of which RCA VDM-119 represents the original soundtrack recording may be rented from Films Incorporated, 5547 North Ravenswood Avenue, Chicago, IL 60640-1199, U.S.A.

4. Edward Wagenknecht, "Here's Richness! A Guide to Shakespeare on Records," *High Fidelity*, 13 (Jan. 1963), 42.

5. John M. Conly, *High Fidelity*, 3 (July-Aug. 1953), 58.

6. From the booklet included in RCA Victor LM-6007 (n. page.).

7. George B. Dowell, *Records in Review: 1958* (The Fourth *High Fidelity* Annual), ed. Frances Newbury (Great Barrington, Mass.: The Wyeth Press, 1957, 1958), pp. 275-276.

8. Originally available as Columbia OL 5390 but now out of print.

9. Dowell, p. 275.

10. Wagenknecht, (n. 4 above), 42, 43.

11. Ibid., 42, 43.

12. Martin Holmes, *The Guns of Elsinore* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), p. 77.

13. Richard L. Sterne, *John Gielgud Directs Richard Burton in 'Hamlet': A Journal of Rehearsals* (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 118.

14. Ibid., p. 199.

15. Ibid., pp. 222, 227, 238, and 240.

16. Immediately after this article was completed and submitted, another recording was issued: BBC Study Cassettes SCN-085. This set, consisting of four cassettes and priced at $29.95 in the United States, features performances by Ronald Pickup, Robert Lang, Angela Pleasance, Maxine Audley, and Martin Jarvis.

Explanatory Note on the Following Chart

The following table is intended to show the relative merit of the recordings with which this study has been primarily concerned (this includes all the ones discussed except the nontraditional Baylor University production). Using the numbering of *The Riverside Shakespeare,* I have, for each recording, counted the number of lines in each scene (a difficult task, because abridged versions contain so many part-lines; it may prove helpful to know that in my system I have counted two half-lines as one whole); figured the percentage that that number of lines represents in relation to the total number of lines in that scene; assigned a numerical rating between 1 and 10, with 10 representing the highest possible score for the performance in each scene; arrived at a total numerical score for each scene, determined by multiplying the numerical rating of that performance by the percentage of lines in that performance in relation to the total number of lines in that scene; established the total number of lines and the percentage that that total number of lines represents in relation to the total number of lines in the play; and tabulated a composite score. By referring to this table, the user can select a certain version for his/her purpose, because it contains either more or less, depending on preference, or because it is either generally superior, or superior in the scenes of particular interest.

	Dublin Gate Theatre Production (774 ll., 20.2%)	Living Shakespeare (795 ll., 20.8%)	Gielgud's Theatre Guild on the Air Production (1343 ll., 35.1%)	Hallmark Hall of Fame Production (1575 ll., 41.1%)	BBC Production (3193 ll., 83.4%)	Gielgud's Original Broadway Cast Production (3182 ll., 83.1%)	Shakespeare Recording Society (3829 ll., 99.95%)	Old Vic Company (3745 ll., 97.8%)	The Marlowe Society and Professional Players (3831 ll., 100%)
Scene 1: 175 ll.	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	33 ll. (18.9%) x 7.75= 1.46	56 ll. (32%) x 8 = 2.56	145 ll. (82.9%) x 7.5= 6.22	114 ll. (65%) x 8.5=5.53	uncut 6.5	174 ll. (99.4%) x 7.5= 7.46	uncut 7.75
Scene 2: 257 ll.	103 ll. (40%) x 7.75 = 3.1	124 ll. (48.3%) x 7 = 3.37	155 ll. (60.3%) x 8.25= 4.98	138 ll. (53.7%) x 7 = 3.76	252 ll. (98.1%) x 7.75=7.60	247 ll. (96.1%) x 9 = 8.30	uncut 7.5	255 ll. (99.2%) x 8.5= 8.43	uncut 8.25
Scene 3: 136 ll.	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	66 ll. (48.5%) x 7.25= 3.52	59 ll. (43.4%) x 7.5=3.25	101 ll. (74.3%) x 8 = 5.92	113 ll. (83.1%) x 9.5=7.89	uncut 7	135 ll. (99.3%) x 7.5= 7.49	uncut 9.5
Scene 4: 91 ll.	19 ll. (20.9%) x 8 = 1.67	36 ll. (38.6%) x 8 = 3.16	30 ll. (32.97%) x 8 = 2.64	44 ll. (48.4%) x 8 = 3.86	87 ll. (95.6%) x 9.8= 9.37	68 ll. (74.7%) x 9.5=7.10	uncut 8.25	89 ll. (97.8%) x 9 = 8.87	uncut 7.5
Scene 5: 190 ll.	117 ll. (61.6%) x 8 = 4.93	73 ll. (38.4%) x 5 = 1.92	114 ll. (60%) x 8 = 4.8	121 ll. (63.7%) x 8 = 5.10	188 ll. (99%) x 7.75=7.67	173 ll. (91.1%) x 9.25=8.42	uncut 9.5	uncut 8.25	uncut 7.75
Scene 6: 117 ll.	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	29 ll. (24.79%) x 7.75= 1.92	0 ll. 0	100 ll. (85.5%) x 8 = 6.84	90 ll. (76.9%) x 9.25=7.11	uncut 8	uncut 7.75	uncut 9
Scene 7: 605 ll.	68 ll. (11.2%) x 7.75 = .868	41 ll. (6.8%) x 7.5=.128	207 ll. (34.2%) x 8 = 2.74	284 ll. (46.9%) x 7.75=3.64	470 ll. (77.7%) x 7.75=6.02	535 ll. (88.4%) x 9.75=8.62	uncut 6.5	578 ll. (95.5%) x 7.25=6.92	uncut 8.5
Scene 8: 187 ll.	115 ll. (61.5%) x 7.5 = 4.51	77 ll. (41.2%) x 7.75=3.19	117 ll. (62.57%) x 7.25= 4.54	118 ll. (63.1%) x 8.5=5.36	uncut 8	181 ll. (96.8%) x 8 = 7.74	uncut 7	uncut 8	uncut 8
Scene 9: 399 ll.	115 ll. (28.8%) x 7 = 2.02	82 ll. (20.6%) x 7.75=1.60	121 ll. (30.3%) x 7 = 2.12	103 ll. (25.8%) x 7.75=2.00	313 ll. (78.5%) x 7.5 =5.88	355 ll. (89%) x 9.25=8.23	uncut 7	365 ll. (91.5%) x 8.25=7.55	uncut 7

Scene 9: 399 ll.	115 ll. (28.8%) x 7 = 2.02	82 ll. (20.6%) x 7.75=1.60	121 ll. (30.3%) x 7 = 2.12	103 ll. (25.8%) x 7.75=2.00	313 ll. (78.5%) x 7.5 =5.88	355 ll. (89%) x 9.25=8.23	uncut 7	365 ll. (91.5%) x 8:25=7.55	uncut 7
Scene 10: 98 ll.	0 ll. 0	(16.3%) x 7.75=1.26	0 ll. 0	(41.8%) x 8 = 3.34	(62.3%) x 8.5=5.29	(93.9%) x 9.5=8.92	uncut 9	uncut 7.75	uncut 7.5
Scene 11: 217 ll.	118 ll. (54.4%) x 6 = 3.26	107 ll. (49.3%) x 7.5= 3.70	98 ll. (45.2%) x 7 = 3.16	105 ll. (48.4%) x 8 = 3.87	182 ll. (83.9%) x 7 = 5.87	187 ll. (86.2%) x 8 = 6.86	uncut 7.5	uncut 8.25	uncut 7.5
Scene 12: 45 ll.	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	3 ll. (6.67%) x 7 = .47	0 ll. 0	40 ll. (88.9%) x 7.5= 6.66	31 ll. (68.9%) x 9 = 6.19	44 ll. (97.8%) x 7.25=7.08	44 ll. (97.8%) x 9 = 8.79	uncut 8.75
Scene 13: 31 ll.	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	15 ll. (48.4%) x 7 = 3.39	0 ll. 0	uncut 8.5	uncut 7	uncut 7.75	uncut
Scene 14: 68 ll.	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	31 ll. (45.6%) x 7.75= 3.53	30 ll. (44.1%) x 9.75=4.29	50 ll. (73.5%) x 8 = 5.88	63 ll. (92.7%) x 8.5= 7.87	uncut 8.5	uncut 7.75	uncut 8.5
Scene 15: 66 ll.	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	0 ll. 0	58 ll. (87.9%) x 8 = 7.03	64 ll. (97%) x 7.5= 7.27	uncut 8.75	uncut 8	uncut
Scene 16: 220 ll.	0 ll. 0	78 ll. (35.5%) x 5 = 1.78	92 ll. (41.8%) x 7 = 2.93	100 ll. (45.5%) x 9 = 4.1	209 ll. (95%) x 8.75=8.31	191 ll. (86.8%) x 9.75=8.46	219 ll. (99.6%) x 8.75=8.71	216 ll. (98.2%) x 7.25=7.12	uncut 8.25
Scene 17: 33 ll.	0 ll. 0	12 ll. (36.4%) x 8 = 2.88	0 ll. 0	5 ll. (15.2%) x 8= 1.22	27 ll. (81.8%) x 9.4=7.59	0 ll. 0	uncut 9.5	uncut 8.5	uncut 9.5
Scene 18: 194 ll.	33 ll. (17%) x 7 = 1.19	18 ll. (9.3%) x 7 = .65	34 ll. (17.53%)x 7.25=1.27	72 ll. (37.1%) x 7=2.60	162 ll. (83.5%) x 7.75=6.47	133 ll. (68.6%) x 9.5= 6.52	uncut 8	uncut 7.5	uncut 7.75
Scene 19: 299 ll.	42 ll. (14.1%) x 6.5 = .917	47 ll. (15.7%) x 7 = 1.06	104 ll. (34.78%)x 7.5= 2.61	126 ll. (42.1%) x 8=3.37	207 ll. (69.2%) x 8 = 5.54	274 ll. (91.6%) x 9.75=9.00	uncut 8	uncut 8.10	uncut 7.75
Scene 20: 403 ll.	44 ll. (10.9%) x 7.5 = .82	84 ll. (20.3%) x 7.75=1.61	109 ll. (27.05%)x 6 = 1.62	158 ll. (39.2%) x 7.5=2.94	354 ll. (87.8%) x 8.25=7.24	240 ll. (59.6%) x 7.25=4.32	uncut 7.25	389 ll. (96.5%) x 7.75=7.48	uncut 7.25
Composite Scores:	23.285	26.308	44.31	58.65	129.4	142.85	156.54	157.71	160

NOTES

Hamlet and Revenge Once Again

SUDHAKAR MARATHE

As T.S. Eliot once remarked,[1] the tone of *Hamlet* is one of the most significant innovations evident in Shakespeare's career. However, next to the character of the prince, perhaps the most controversial aspect of the play has been its theme of revenge, not its tone. Following Eliot's indication, it is proposed here to suggest that the tone of this play as it is initiated in the opening scenes ought to bear strongly on its central themes, and on any interpretation of the play; I futher hope to show that the opening scenes of *Hamlet* do *not* indicate revenge as the predominant theme of the play.

Although *Hamlet* opens with Denmark in a state between war and peace, there is no hint in the first scene of impending, desired, or even necessary revenge. At least the first act of the play evolves on the pattern of a mystery, which is resolved for the hero only in the final scene of the play. The sense of mystery is embodied in the very first exchange in the opening scene, which is a clear reversal of the usual sequence of a sentry's challenge. As has been pointed out often, the man *currently* on guard duty, Fransisco, *should* say: "Who's there?" Instead the line is given to Bernardo, the man who has come to *relieve* Fransisco, so that Fransisco himself is obliged to say: "*Nay,* answer *me:* stand and unfold *yourself.*"[2] This reversal is emphasized only shortly afterwards by the occurrence of the normal and proper order of challenge and reply.

Why then the mysterious reversal of roles at the outset? Why does Fransisco say, "'tis better cold, / And *I am sick at heart*" ? As Eliot has pointed out, this first scene contains a superb combination of soldierly language, mysterious occurrence and allusion, complex factual statement, and ceremonious "poetry" as well as equipoise of poetic and prosaic rhythms. This is clearly a *carefully* constructed scene, deliberate in its effects to the minutest detail. In brief, it reveals an ambiguous state of affairs in the nation, tinged with strange unease, and a perplexing apparition, the Ghost, for the clarification of whose significance we must wait for a while. The rhythm of tension and release is carefully varied. The tension and mystery of the opening are scarcely diluted by the resumption of normal guard-post exchanges, before Marcellus's query, "What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?" introduces one of the main themes of the play by means of "this thing." Yet barely begun, the narrative about the apparition is broken by its first appearance on stage. The appearance, therefore, immediately tests Horatio's scepticism: "What art thou that usurp'st this time of night. . . ." Fear, a vision that leaves even Horatio pale and trembling, the bitter cold and threats of war constitute the opening situation of *Hamlet*. Horatio's estimate of the situation also provides a brief preview of the future of Denmark ("in the gross and scope of my opinion, / This bodes some strange eruption to our state"), just as his subsequent narrative about Old Hamlet exploits the opportunity to summarize events from the recent past. The historical revelations include references to usurpation, combats, deaths, forfeiture of lands, as well as intimations of preparations afoot elsewhere for renewal of the old conflict. Old Hamlet's Ghost is clearly taken to be ominous: it is spoken of as "this portentous figure."

The seeds of several themes are sown here that will bear significant fruit later at various stages of the action. "We do it wrong, being so majestical, / To offer it the show of violence," for instance, inevitably links with the violence which had resulted in Old Hamlet's death and on the other hand it foreshadows the moral, psychological and physical violence of the rest of the play. The first scene then ends with a show of purpose and decision embodied not in diction alone but also in the verse rhythm:

> Break we our watch up; and by my advice,
> Let us impart what we have seen to-night
> Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
> This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.

This is the only mention of young Hamlet in the entire scene, although he appears on stage almost immediately in the next scene; the soldiers on duty expect an eventual resolution to the mystery of the apparition. Notice, therefore, that an excellent opportunity to hint at revenge has been passed up in this last speech. *The first scene of Hamlet contains no reference to revenge.*

It is a strong scene, as T.S. Eliot has ably demonstrated, one of the most successful opening scenes in drama: powerful in verse technique and variation, dramatic action and suggestion; and substantial in informative content and aural and visual impact. Therefore, the absence of "revenge" in it must be taken seriously. That is not all. Even through 1.2 and 1.3 young Hamlet is preoccupied not with revenge but with *grief* regarding his father's death, and *anger* mixed with *perplexity* regarding his mother's haste in marrying

Claudius, whom he dislikes for purely personal reasons. Therefore, the theme of revenge, when it is finally introduced, seems to enter as *an additional complication*.

On the other hand, the state of the kingdom of Denmark, the state of Hamlet's mind, and the nature of human existence and death, both in appearance and reality, enter from the beginning as the *principal* themes. Next (1.3), as an important annexure to these themes, appears Hamlet's love for Ophelia: it is not noticed frequently enough that the love theme and its progress are given a most peculiar treatment in this play.

Coleridge and Goethe have, perhaps, gone too far in reading themselves into Hamlet's character—in this criticism one must agree with Eliot's otherwise controversial essay, "Hamlet" (1919)—but the direction of their interpretation cannot be criticized. The play does appear to be about these obsessive preoccupations of Hamlet the character. It seems to me, therefore, that neither revenge nor succession to the throne, both popular themes with Shakespeare's audiences, appear as the central concern of the play; they may have been retained from the sources and developed to some extent, as the proverbial carrot to attract the audience. Even the classic bone of contention, Hamlet's tendency to muse, has been strongly established as a facet of his character *before* the introduction of the revenge theme. Therefore, we can consider Hamlet's inwardness somewhat independently of the revenge theme.

Then, only after grief, anger, frustration and love have been presented, do the details of the murder and the likely cause of a desire for revenge reveal themselves for the first time. Hamlet's reaction to Horatio's report of the Ghost (1.2) has not been unusually strong, except in his desire to hear what his father's Ghost may have to tell him, although he does voice a general apprehension similar to the watch's in the first scene: "all is not well; / I doubt some foul play." Quite contrary to expectation, again, Horatio's report is not followed by a revelation scene; a semi-comic departure scene in the house of Polonius follows instead, and incidentally it reveals the romantic connection between Ophelia and Hamlet. Grief and perplexity before love, love before revenge: that is the order of presentation of themes.

Scene 1.4 opens heavily, cold and portentous, finally the revelation scene. The Ghost reveals the treachery, and exhorts Hamlet to carry out revenge. Yet the ceremonious swearing of revenge has a definite edge of comedy: "Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so: art thou there, true-penny? / Come on,—you hear this fellow in the cellarage. . . ."[3] It ought to be remarked that this exhortation by the Ghost introduces, if not a new element into the play at this advanced stage (the middle of 1.4), then an effort to reduce the importance of the element, the element of revenge. It is contrary to common dramatic practice to introduce a central theme so late in a play. It is at least reasonable to assume, therefore, that revenge may not after all be quite central to the *thematic* structure of the play, although it may be important in the plot structure. Shakespearean criticism does not commonly accept that the mixed nature of themes and plot-elements in his plays may be a gifted writer's solution to the problem of transcending the limits of current form without adverse commercial consequences. *Hamlet* is a borderline play in many ways, experimental, between the more conformist early plays and the clearly innovative later plays.[4]

Thus revenge can be seen as a plot-level concession to the original sources and to the necessity of holding the audience's attention. Contemporary references to the earlier, non-Shakespearean *Hamlet* are proof of the tremendous popularity of this aspect of the subject. The fact that revenge *was* one of the more exciting themes of Elizabethan plays makes the mechanics of revenge a sensible choice as an attention-holding device rather than as a central theme. At the end of 1.5, Hamlet does not seem consumed by a passion for revenge. The first act ends with the same kind of all-embracing tone with which it had begun, an act which is not exclusively coloured by revenge, but merely tinged with it. It does not give support to the idea that Hamlet should be interpreted as a revenge play.

In fact, there are other, more obvious ways of looking at the play. We might make a convenient beginning by comparing Claudius and Hamlet. At the opening of 1.2 Claudius says, "Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death / The memory be green," and in 2.2, after some characteristically glib words, he speaks of "Hamlet's transformation." Here as in the rest of the play Claudius is preoccupied with his own guilt (apart from the Ghost's revelation to Hamlet, we do not know this till much later when Claudius speaks of "The harlot's cheek, beautified with plast'ring art" 3.1.49-54): Claudius's preoccupation results in his constant plotting—to find out what Hamlet knows and which way his intention is inclined, or to devise his death. If it were Claudius's play, it would more properly constitute a "revenge-tragedy" with a reversal in importance of the usual roles of avenger and victim.

In his own knowledge of his guilt, at first Claudius is vaguely suspicious of Hamlet. Gradually, observing Hamlet's ways, he grows more pointedly suspicious. He finds Hamlet's sorrow "excessive"; after all, he *would* find it so, for he has killed his own brother without compunction. Claudius is a self-centred man. When we contrast his speeches and behaviour to Hamlet's, a fundamental difference between their self-centrednesses becomes evident. From his first appearance Hamlet is sunk in grief for his father's death and his mother's lecherous haste. Later, he learns about his uncle's possible guilt, and this adds to his burden the new weight of revenge. But the difference between their two characters makes Hamlet's idea of revenge transcend personal involvement. The play does not depict Hamlet much affected by the loss of his opportunity to ascend the throne; the general lack of emphasis on this matter in the play, and the final mention of it only among many other problems at the end of the play (5.1), could mean that Hamlet was not so concerned about his *personal* gain or loss as much as he was about the situation around him that highlighted peculiar problems of human existence. Hamlet too is self-centred but in a different way from Claudius: though entirely practical in matters concerning self-preservation, Hamlet is not interested in the selfish aspects of his situation.

The difference between the two characters may show a way in which we can interpret Hamlet's character as primarily preoccupied neither with revenge nor with his succession to the throne of Denmark. He is capable of making use of the intensity of his personal concerns to set his problems in the framework of the entire universe. On the other hand, Claudius grows more and more narrowly selfish as the action progresses. I would like to suggest that this contrast between the two principal characters in the play, as well as the contrast between the dead king and Claudius, is at the centre of the play. Claudius is closer to Richard III in his selfish self-centredness; Hamlet is closer to Richard II in his self-centred immersion in a situation of widening dimensions. It may even be possible to suggest that the play is truly a revenge play only as far as Claudius is concerned, whereas (as many have thought) for Hamlet, it is a tragedy of excessive inwardness. It is not necessary for this conclusion to see Hamlet either as a fragile receptacle of weighty experience, as did Goethe, or as the epitome of a procrastinator, incapable of physical action, as did Coleridge and his followers. An extreme situation brings to light an exceptional capacity for concrete—poetically concrete—philosophically acute analysis, which, in any other less extreme situation would have constituted a virtue.

There are other features of the play that lead to similar conclusions. The pervasive irony and morbid imagery of the play, for instance, make it abundantly clear that death outweighs revenge in Hamlet's innermost *thoughts*. In other ways, too, the play can be seen as a successful attempt to extend the limits of initially personal experience of the character—always to the last *personal* in an important sense, as in all of Shakespeare's mature plays—to include universal experience. The history of *Hamlet* criticism clearly shows that the complex thematic structure, much wider and more inherently absorbing than would be available in a pure revenge tragedy, gives the play its lasting interest. We must not let Hamlet's "Yea, from the table of my memory / I'll wipe away all trivial fond records" (1.5) beguile us into thinking that he has foresworn thought of all else besides revenge. He is as *precise* with what he wants to say here as one can expect a philosophically inclined, educated young man to be in a state of heightened self-awareness. He swears to wipe away all *trivia.* These include even love, after Ophelia's behaviour gives him indications of deception and after he has shrewdly understood her ability to go out of herself only to help her father. (She too is self-centred in an abject and dependent way.) But what has occupied Hamlet's mind from the beginning—his sorrow, anguish, anger, frustration and bewilderment—is neither trivial nor fond, and it is not wiped away. Nor does revenge succeed in overshadowing it. The nutshell image that Hamlet gives is expressly apt: his mind is in danger of cracking open with tension in the process of expanding with these weighty matters; they *remain* with him *after* he has rid his memory of the trivia.

This tension is liable to become confused with the adoption of a veneer of madness. The meaning of the play hardly consists of the idea that experience of highly intense grief and frustration must lead to insanity or sexual perversion. Hamlet is so clearly in the grip of a multitude of problems, as no other Shakespearean tragic hero is, that to reduce his situation either to madness or to revenge or sexual perversion is to confuse the basic facts of the play into a nonsensical structure. Can one say that *Hamlet* has universal appeal because its hero is mad? Sickness and madness can hardly appeal to us as norms. Now, one of the assumptions behind interpretations of the play that consider Hamlet genuinely insane or perverse is the uniqueness of the revenge or lecherous love as preoccupation. Yet even the Elizabethans were aware of degrees of melancholia.[5] However, if we perceive revenge as only one of the themes and not as the unique, consuming passion of Hamlet, we can see Hamlet as highly wrought and disturbed, but nearer to what Claudius calls his "unprevailing woe" than to clear madness. Hamlet himself shows awareness of this important distinction when he criticizes the roving actor: "What would he do / Had he the motive and the cue for passion / That I have?" (2.2).

It seems more profitable to look into the argument that *Hamlet* is the "apotheosis" of "revenge-tragedy."[6] Just as it would be a mistake to excise revenge as a theme from the play, it would be a mistake to set *Hamlet* within the mainstream of revenge-tragedy of the day, as F.T. Bowers does;[7] for certainly Bowers goes too far when he speaks of the "Hamlet-school" as a "distinct species of the tragedy of blood . . . a tragedy whose leading motive is revenge and whose main action deals with the progress of this revenge, leading to the deaths of the murderers and often the death of the avenger himself."[8] A superficial interpretation that ignores the many dominating themes and other features in *Hamlet* would allow us to construe revenge as its "leading motive" and the "main action." While we cannot ignore Bowers's list of typical revenge-play characteristics, it would not be correct to assume that Shakespeare adopts these features *without significant modifi-*

cation. Even *A Comedy of Errors* and *Titus Andronicus* clearly show that he would hardly use a convention without simultaneously modifying it for additional dramatic gains of his own. A play in which "To be, or not to be," "O that this too too sullied flesh," "Get thee to a nunnery," the providence in the fall of a sparrow, and the memento mori of Yorick's skull in Hamlet's hand figure among the chief highlights cannot be considered a play with revenge as its "leading motive" and "main action."

The concept of blood-revenge does apply to *Hamlet*, for Hamlet intends to kill Claudius for the murder of Old Hamlet. But at least the several deaths that precede the final carnage cannot be accounted for as blood-revenge. Even the final bloody scene is the result of a set of prior as well as immediate causes not many of which are of Hamlet's making. Nor does Hamlet pursue revenge with the sort of unrelenting singlemindedness that was found in reports of actual revenges and in dramatic representations of revenge in the Elizabethan age. For a time, Hamlet actually internalizes the idea till it becomes almost entirely theoretical; the deepest levels of exploration of Hamlet's predicament exist in this inward probing and not in the outward pursuit of revenge.

Hamlet's pursuit of revenge includes the assumption of an "antic disposition," but this disposition provides him with an opportunity for probing not only into the Ghost's accusations and Claudius's past actions, but also into his own mind. As is patent, he has to be *reminded* by the Ghost in Act 3 of his duty to avenge his father's murder. What emerges as the peculiarly Hamletian characteristic in connection with revenge as with the other themes is his ability to conduct *objective* and *critical* self-examination. The soliloquy "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" is a marvellous example of this ability. Revenge is more the motive for some of Hamlet's self-probing than it is for the action of the play. The facts of the play are such that an attempt to propose revenge as the main theme, motive or action of the play invariably flounders against the need to explain the excessive procrastination of Hamlet in carrying out the revenge. The delay exceeds the plot's complication, which is revenge very unlike other revenge-tragedies. But if one sees the tendency to procrastinate—or, more accurately, to probe, to understand a problem that possesses deadly fascination—as the main theme of the play, the procrastination ceases to be a critical stumbling block. Or, rather, the play becomes then a problem tragedy instead of a revenge-play. Just as much as it is a revenge play, *Hamlet* is also a love play, a regicide play, a succession play, and so on. A much more apt explanation of the entire play would be that, being the first of Shakespeare's new and mature tragedies, it contains unmistakable evidence, confirmed in later tragedies, to show that *Hamlet* is not a formula-tragedy. Historically, *Hamlet* must be seen as a revenge-play; among the themes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* too we must include and account for the theme of blood-revenge. Yet Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is not a revenge-tragedy, nor was it meant to be, if we are to believe the evidence of the several early scenes of the play and of the many recurring themes other than revenge.

Especially in drama first impressions are of immense significance and the first impressions of *Hamlet* (1.1, 1.2, 1.3) do not include revenge. The changes Shakespeare made in his sources are all significant in this context, for they show his intention to convert an obvious revenge-play into something novel and different: he has reduced the gruesomeness of the original final carnage; he has freed the mind of the hero from revenge as an all-consuming passion; he has presented the initial theme, action and character without reference to revenge. Besides, Shakespeare's first scenes are quite consistently prophetic of the plays that follow them: if the initial scenes of a play do not include revenge, we have to conclude, both on internal evidence and evidence of the larger Shakespearean pattern, that revenge could not have been the primary focus, nor the exclusive focus, of the play. It is a mark of unique genius that the presence of conventional features does not account for the essence of a work. Therefore, an attempt to see *Hamlet* as predominantly a revenge-tragedy amounts also to an attempt to reduce the significance of the play. The universal continuing appeal of the play comes from its openness, from its refusal to be tied down to the revenge convention, from its relevance to the general human condition beyond the compass of a revenge situation.

Hamlet appeals to us, because in the face of intense disturbance the young prince attempts with courage and vigour of intellect (and when required, physical vigour as well) to understand and direct the course of his life; yet finally he accepts the presence of a higher pattern that directs life, without the assumption of which life must appear as existentialist absurdity and chaos. The play does not present a confirmed chaotic or absurd vision of life. If we take Shakespeare's *art* seriously, we must take the opening scenes of the play seriously, and build our understanding of the play on the foundation of the initial tone and facts of the play, and not on a pre-posed concept of revenge-tragedy.

NOTES

1. An exceptionally substantial analysis of the first scene of *Hamlet* can be found in Eliot's unpublished lectures on Shakespeare's verse, delivered at Edinburgh University in 1937, entitled "Shakespeare as Poet and Dramatist" (King's College, Cambridge and the Houghton Library possess variant versions.) A shorter version of the analysis was later included in the published lecture *Poetry and Drama* (1949). The analysis was, however, omitted from a condensed version of the Edinburgh lectures, which Eliot delivered in Germany. This version is available in translation as "Shakespeare Verskunst," *Der Monat*,

II.20 (May 1950) 198-207.

2. See The New Variorum Edition of *Hamlet*, ed. H.H. Furness (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1877), Vol. 1, Footnote to 1.1.1.

3. An interesting and detailed treatment of the comic aspects of *Hamlet* can be found in a forthcoming paper of Maurice Charney. (Professor Charney read the paper at the Universsity of Western Ontario, Canada in April, 1982). However, for the ideas concerning revenge in this paper I am entirely responsible.

4. In this connection, again, the two Eliot lectures on Shakespeare (Edinburgh, 1937) are particularly illuminating. See also Gordon Ross Smith, "*Hamlet:* The Transitional Play Between Shakespeare's Two Major Dramatic Methods," *HSt*, 1 (1979), 13-21.

5. See W.I.D. Scott. *Shakespeare's Melancholics* (1929). Folcroft Library Edition, 1969.

6. The term is F.T. Bowers's. See his *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 179. But in making *Hamlet* a prototype for an entire class of blood-revenge tragedies, which he does in a somewhat ambiguous fashion, Bowers nullifies the meaning of "apotheosis." Among revenge-tragedies, *Hamlet* is exceptional not only because Shakespeare's art is more mature than other dramatists', but also because revenge cannot be seen as its single and simple explanation.

7. Bowers' somewhat one-sided argument regarding *Hamlet* as revenge play has been answered, from the religious viewpoint, by Eleanor Prosser's *Hamlet and Revenge*, 2d ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).

8. (Emphasis added); Bowers (n. 6 above), p. 62, refers to A.H. Thorndike, "The Relations of *Hamlet* to the Contemporary Revenge Play," *P.M.L.A.*, Vol. XVII (1902), 125. Although Bowers' book contains hints elsewhere that there is more to *Hamlet* than to a formula revenge-tragedy, here he clearly classifies it, with *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Antonio's Revenge*, as the purer instance of Elizabethan revenge-tragedy.

9 In Eliot's criticism can be found confirmation of the idea that the unique and lasting popularity of *Hamlet* derives from the combination of its universal appeal and its dramatic innovation. Especially relevant are the two Edinburgh lectures cited above (n. 1) in which Eliot drastically modifies his earlier view regarding the success of the play as set out in "Hamlet" (1919). But there are hints of his later view in numerous well-known and less well-known essays of Eliot.

A Consummation Devoutly to Be Wished: Sexual Desire As Death-Longing in Two Poems by W.B. Yeats with Influences of *Hamlet*

MICHAEL D. STANNARD

No matter where we begin in the universe of English literature, themes of sex, death, and corruption should carry us to *Hamlet* and set us down beside Claudius and Gertrude's bed. No work in all of literature seems to include so much of human life, and at the center of the play is a corrupt sexual relationship: all the action and psychic energy emanate from the love of Claudius for his brother's wife.

There are echoes of *Hamlet* in two poems Yeats wrote in the years after Maud Gonne's marriage in 1903. Their common theme is that sexual desire is an expression of a longing for death. "His Dream" appeared in 1908 and "That the Night Come" in 1912.

Yeats spent most of his youth hoping that Maud Gonne would marry him. During fourteen years of "perplexed wooing" he kept himself chaste with the thought that he loved "the most beautiful woman in the world." Despite her refusals he says it never occurred to him to seek another love. He repeated again and again to himself Lancelot's last confession, "I have loved a queen beyond measure and exceeding long."[1] He was profoundly shaken when she married John MacBride, a nationalist who had gone to South Africa to work as an assayer, then raised an Irish Brigade to fight the British when the Boer War broke out. The five years that followed her marriage were among the least productive in Yeats's career. Richard Ellmann says that "his fists were tightly clenched."[2] The secret cause of his disappointed love finally settled out of his sorrow in the insight that sexual love is an aspect of a universal human progress of corruption. This was the meaning of his long pursuit of "a proud woman not kindred of his soul."[3]

Much is known about the composition of "His Dream" from a note that accompanied the poem on its first printing in *The Nation* of London (July 11, 1908), Perhaps because his theme was so contrary-to-intuition, Yeats emphasized his role as a vehicle. He described his actual dream and concluded, "I have made my poem out of my dream and the sentiment of my dream, and can almost say, as Blake did, 'The Authors are in Eternity.'" "His Dream" was the opening poem in all three editions of *The Green Helmet and Other Poems*. In the first two editions (1910 and 1911) it and the seven poems that followed it were grouped under the general title of "Raymond Lully and His Wife Pernella." Yeats had meant to write "Nicholas Flamel and His Wife Pernella," and inserted an erratum slip in the first edition to that effect. Flamel was an alchemist who died in Paris in 1418.[4] He and Pernella represented for Yeats a model of the "spiritual marriage"[5] he was trying to rekindle with Maud Gonne in 1908 and 1909 (she separated from MacBride in 1905).[6] The alchemical rubric also emphasized the arcane character of the truth Yeats uncovered in "His Dream":

> I swayed upon the gaudy stern
> The butt end of a steering oar,
> And everywhere that I could turn.
> Men ran upon the shore.
>
> And though I would have hushed the crowd
> There was no mother's son, but said,
> "What is the figure in a shroud
> Upon a gaudy bed?"
>
> And fishes bubbling to the brim
> Cried out upon that thing beneath,
> It had such dignity of limb,
> By the sweet name of Death.
>
> Though I'd my finger on my lip,
> What could I but take up the song?
> And fish and crowd and gaudy ship
> Cried out the whole night long,
>
> Crying amid the glittering sea,
> Naming it with ecstatic breath,
> Because it had such dignity,
> By the sweet name of Death.

Here the echo of *Hamlet* is faint. At the very end of Act 1 Hamlet forces Horatio and Marcellus to swear not to tell that they have seen his father's ghost. The ghost too commands them to swear. They do, and Hamlet says, "Rest,

rest, perturbèd spirit." Then to Horatio and Marcellus he says, "Let us go in together / And still your fingers on your lips, I pray" (All references to Shakespeare are from *The Signet Classic Shakespeare*). It is not only because it is politic that Hamlet enjoins silence on his companions. It is also the instinct of human nature to suppress extraordinary truth. Yeats on his ship and Hamlet coming from the battlements are hushing truths that contradict the natural order of the world. The dead rise, and death rises out of sex: completely improbable truths which our instinct is to suppress.

The gaudy ship is the same as the "horrible splendour of desire" of "The Tower" (1927)—both describe the extravagance of the claim of sexual desire upon our consciousness. Yeats holds the steering oar, but he is not in control; he is swept along by ship and crowd. And the ship which stands for sexual desire carries the figure of a woman so beautiful that the fish come to the surface to cry out that it is death. The poem appears here as it appeared in the 1910 edition of *The Green Helmet and Other Poems*. Yeats later took out the fish, but in the first eight printings of the poem the crowd questioned, mute creation answered in the fish, and the cry of the fish became the cry of all creation: the object of desire is death.

The echo of *Hamlet* is very strong in "That the Night Come," though apparently nothing is known about the composition of the poem. It first appeared in the 1912 edition of *The Green Hamlet and Other Poems*. In *A Commentary on the Collected Poems* of W.B. Yeats, A. Norman Jeffares says only that the poem is about Maud Gonne:[7]

She lived in storm and strife,
Her soul had such desire
For what proud death may bring
That it could not endure
The common good of life,
But lived as 'twere a king
That packed his marriage day
With banneret and pennon,
Trumpet and kettledrum,
And the outrageous cannon,
To bundle time away
That the night come.

Also in Act 1, Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo tell Hamlet they have seen his father's ghost. He tells them he will watch with them that night and says when they are gone: "My father's spirit—in arms? All is not well. / I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come! / Till then sit still, my soul"

(1.2.255-7). That night as they watch they hear "a flourish of trumpets, and two pieces go off." Horatio asks, "What does this mean, my lord?" Hamlet replies:

> The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
> Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring upspring reels,
> And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down
> The kettledrum and trumpet thus bray out
> The triumph of his pledge.
>
> (1.4.7-12)

Yeats's borrowing is so direct that we can imagine Maud Gonne on the battlements at Elsinore in place of Hamlet. Hamlet anticipates a confrontation with his destiny in his meeting with his father's ghost; Maud Gonne was seeking "some memorable action for final consecration of her youth."[8] In both characters (and Maud Gonne was a legend too) a restless dissatisfaction is finally expressed in a conscious longing for death; and in Maud Gonne it is more precisely the sexual impulse that is transformed.

Yeats expressed this theme that sex and death are complementary impulses in a unified metaphysics of corruption very clearly a few years later when he was writing his "draft autobiography" (about 1916). The passage is about Olivia Shakespear, a lifelong friend with whom Yeats had love affairs during at least two periods of his life:[9]

> It will always be a grief to me that I could not give the love that was her beauty's right, but she was too near my soul, too salutary and wholesome to my inmost being. All our lives long, as da Vinci says, we long, thinking it is but the moon that we long [for], for our destruction, and how, when we meet [it] in the shape of a most fair woman, can we do less than leave all others for her? Do we not seek our dissolution upon her lips?[10]

He had quoted the sentence from da Vinci's *Notebooks* before, in *The Tables of the Law* (1897):

> The hope and desire of returning home to one's former state is like the moth's desire for the light; and the man who with constant longing awaits each new month and new year, deeming that the things he longs for are ever too late in coming, does not perceive that he is longing for his own destruction.[11]

Many years later, employing da Vinci's conceit, he made the poem "The Wheel" (1921), the last two lines of which are :

Nor know that what disturbs our blood
Is but its longing for the tomb.

Da Vinci claims that death which we don't consciously desire can be considered a desire because it is the final condition of our sensual nature: deep insight or disingenuousness; this claim is anyway accessible to common sense. Yeats's addition that sexual desire is an expression of our desire for death, reflecting and illuminating it, is more disturbing and more difficult. Our intuition tells us that sexual desire is the expression of an instinct for life, even the profane parallel of the soul's desire for eternal life.

At its most ferocious the psychology of Yeats's insight seems to be that sexual desire is the cunning of nature, the grip which makes us nature's agents in its drive toward disintegration; for the cycle which finishes in disintegration requires repeated illusive renewal.

But Yeats's insight is also plausible within the limits of a milder psychology. Any strong feeling which heightens the influence of the sensual nature will recall our mortality. Sexual desire always carries an echo of death because in it we experience the domination of the sensual nature consciously, and it is precisely that domination which is death. Sex brings us into an alien reality which like death as we imagine it involves us from outside, concentrating oblivion and extinguishing thought; it is dissolution into a larger less conscious reality which fills us with wonder as does death.

Yeats was captivated by da Vinci's description of the desire of the "spirit of the elements imprisoned within the life of the human body to return to primal chaos,"[12] but he was not committed to it as truth. (It's a materialist's and an empiricist's view.) This is death as dissolution, but Yeats believed in the immortality of the soul and regarded death as a passage. R.W. Desai treats this view thoroughly in *Yeats's Shakespeare,* where he concludes that "in terms of Yeats's philosophy, death meant the unification of man with his daimon, in short, the achievement of completeness"[13] (The daimon is the "ultimate self" of a man, of which his earthly incarnation is only a small part.)[14]

If death is union it is easy to see how it is reflected in sex; and without circularity sex can be offered as a simile through which the nature of death is apprehended. Shakespeare can make Lear say, "I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom" (4.6.201); and Yeats can represent Maud Gonne's death-seeking in the image of a king awaiting the consummation of his marriage. Yet when we read these similes, we regard them more as revealing than as reinforcing. Circularitty is formally absent, but there is a temptation to accuse Yeats especially of beginning from a metaphysic of sex and capriciously imposing the sexual construction onto death. Sex was central to Yeats's vision and the source of his artistic vitality. The suspicion is that he made the dominant mystery of human life conform to the image of the dominant impulse, though perhaps they have only their dominance in common.

Is death bodily destruction and the disintegration of the personality? and do we desire it because the spirit of the elements within us longs to return to primal chaos? Or is it reunion with the ultimate self, which we desire because it brings us closer to our perfection? It appears that Yeats was intrigued by the former, which provided him with arcane solace in his disappointment over Maud Gonne, but that he believed the latter. In Yeats this kind of inconsistency does not constitute a contradiction; he was unreliable as a witness of the truth, with stronger commitments to novelty and enthusiasm. In "Vacillation" (1932) he even boasted of this with the prideful flippancy which characterized his later years. The soul says, "Seek out reality, leave things that seem," and the heart replies, "What, be a singer born and lack a theme?"

There is no necessary contradiction between a view that death means dissolution and a view that death means completion, fulfillment, or union. We may seek our destruction and our perfection at the same time in a war of natures such as St. Paul describes in the seventh chapter of Romans. The sensual nature seeks to "return to primal chaos" (in da Vinci's words), while the soul seeks through eternity to perfect itself in the image of God. Yeats was careful to guard this distinction when he wrote "The Wheel": it is our "blood" that is said to long for the tomb.

He was less careful to trace the soul's journey to its end. (Just try to find it described in *A Vision* !) The sensual nature dissolves, but the soul does not dissolve with it. Yet the completeness the soul achieves through union with its daimon cannot be its perfection since other incarnations await it, breaking the continuity of its identity, from which it follows that the end of its journey is its extinction. This is deferral of dissolution, a materialist view in which the soul's journey mimics the cycle of death and rebirth of the natural world. Nor can dissolution be considered a form of union. Union implies the preservation of individuality, in this case the self of the conscious soul.

The model of union is the marriage formula of Genesis 2.24. As in marriage two persons become one flesh, so at death the soul retains its consciousness of self while it achieves nearer identity of inclination with God. Shakespeare uses this model of honorable sexual union for the soul at death when he makes Cleopatra say, "The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,/ which hurts and is desired" (5.2.290-1). The simile is the same in "That the Night Come," but grotesquely applied. Since Maud Gonne's intention is to escape, Yeats evidently meant to represent sex and death as dissolution of the personality as well as of the sensual nature.

Any view of death presented Yeats with a dramatic possibility. He did not have a consistent world view nor did he diligently seek one. (Joseph Hone calls *A Vision* Yeats's *Anschauung*, but Yeats did not risk a commitment to his system. In the first edition of 600 copies printed privately in 1925, he revived his character from the nineties, Owen Aherne, to write the introduction. Aherne brings in his companion character from the nineties, Michael Robartes, who is said to have discovered in Cracow an occult text by a medieval philosopher, Giraldus. The two old puppets collaborate on an exposition, quarrel, and finally turn the material over to Yeats to finish. This was the beginning of *A Vision:* world view as private joke.)

Yeats was satisfied to live from passion to passion, whether of sexual desire or poetic inspiration. Consolation for him was the faith that the blessed moment of intensity would always return. Salvation as the return of that moment is a theme of "Among School Children," "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," and "Vacillation," to name a few. Yeat's great career was based to an astonishing degree on accident and opportunity. Da Vinci's *Notebooks* or Isaiah's coal—it was all the same to him so he could make a song out of it. In "Vacillation" (1932) he even boasted of this with the prideful flippancy which characterized his later years. The soul says, "Seek out reality, leave things that seem," and the heart replies, "What, be a singer born and lack a theme?"

Yeats left a record in his journal of a performance of *Hamlet* that he attended in October 1909. He saw the beginning, skipped the "Ophelia scenes" because he had business at the Abbey, and "came back for Hamlet at the graveside":

> I feel in *Hamlet*, as always in Shakespeare, that I am in the presence of a soul lingering on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity. Has not that threshold always been terrible, even crime-haunted?[15]

Yeats's theme that sexual desire is death-longing is never verbalized in *Hamlet*, but its operation on our senses there is vivid and immediate. A corrupt sexual attachment produces general ruin in the space of three hours. We watch Claudius and Gertrude and Hamlet and Ophelia act out pathological love relationships knowing that they are almost dead already. Shakespeare held the mirror up to nature and Yeats extracted a generalization.

When Hamlet says, "Would the night were come! / Till then sit still, my soul," it is death in the shape of his father's ghost that he longs to confront. Does Maud Gonne too linger on the storm-beaten threshold of sanctity? She confronts death with pride and fearlessness, nobility and passion: surely this is an heroic stance? It requires only a few readings to glimpse that this is not heroism at all but imposition and affectation. Any motive of public spirit in her activism is completely dismissed. She doesn't act from the interest of Ireland, but from sexual pathology. Her pursuit of an heroic death is comprehended in the image of a king awaiting the consummation of his marriage: the testimony of Yeats's imagery is that in Maud Gonne the sexual impulse was transformed into a conscious seeking of death, that she enacted her heroics for Ireland on the storm-beaten threshold of sexual sublimation. This is the testimony also of the direct biographical material. At the end of the draft autobiography Yeats writes of her:

> She was now always very emotional, and would kiss me very tenderly, but when I spoke of marriage on the eve of her leaving said, "No, it seems to me impossible." And then, with clenched hands, "I have a horror and terror of physical love."[16]

NOTES

1. W.B. Yeats, *Memoirs: Autobiography—First Draft, Journal*, ed. Denis Donoghue (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 65, 72, 125.

2. Richard Ellmann, *Yeats: The Man and the Masks* (New York: Dutton, 1948), p. 165.

3. W.B. Yeats, "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" in *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957). All references to Yeats's poems are from this volume.

4. John Read, *Prelude to Chemistry: An Outline of Alchemy: Its Literature and Relationships* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1936), p. 59.

5. Nancy Cardozo, *Lucky Eyes and a High Heart: The Life of Maud Gonne* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978), pp. 258-63.

6. Samuel Levenson, *Maud Gonne* (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976), pp. 243-48.

7. A. Norman Jeffares, *A Commentary on the Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 147.

8. *Memoirs* (n. 1 above), p. 42.

9. Ibid., p. 88; *Man and the Masks* (n. 2 above), p. 179.

10. *Memoirs* (n. 1 above), p. 88.

11. W.B. Yeats, *Mythologies* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 301-2.

12. *Memoirs* (n. 1 above), p. 88 (Denis Donoghue's note).

13. Rupin W. Desai, *Yeats's Shakespeare* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1971), p. 120.

14. Ibid., p. 112.

15. *Memoirs* (n. 1 above), p. 233.

16. Ibid., p. 134.

PRODUCTIONS

The Dame as Dane: A Comparative Analysis of Two Female Hamlets

In the past two centuries, beginning with Sarah Siddons in 1775, a number of highly acclaimed actresses have taken on the role of Hamlet. Although each was considered a novelty in her day, those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—notably Charlotte Crampton, Eliza Warren, Alice Marriott, and Charlotte Cushman—received more favorable attention from critics and audiences alike than those of our century have. Perhaps that is because theatergoers of the past did not associate a player's enacting the role of one of the opposite sex with sexual reversal or ambiguity; the justification for a woman's playing Hamlet was her own capability of doing so. After all, in the not-too-distant past boys had played Ophelia, and in opera sexual role changes had always been acceptable. Thus during the nineteenth century some fifty professional actresses played the prince—in France, Italy, and Australia as well as in Great Britain and the United States.[1] Although some reviewers dismissed all such efforts as "trespass[es] against good taste," "histrionic feats . . . [that] do violence to the intentions of the dramatist," others treated the better performances with seriousness and respect. The Liverpool *Daily Post* of December 1, 1859, for example, declared of Alice Marriott's Hamlet, "The young prince of Denmark never found a more fitting representative than in this gifted lady."[2] And for Charlotte Cushman's 1861 run as Hamlet in Boston, Edwin Booth loaned her his costume.

Following in the line of Sarah Bernhardt—who played Hamlet at the turn of this century—Eva LeGallienne, and Siobahn McKenna, Dame Judith Anderson is the best-known actress to have played the role in recent years. In 1970 at the age of seventy-two, the Dame toured the United States as the Dane. Appearing mainly to college audiences, she saw the role as an opportunity to raise their cultural level. Whereas her portrayal generated enthusiasm among the young and inexperienced in serious theater, it was rejected as reductio ad absurdum by critics in New York, where she played the role twice at Carnegie Hall. Hamlet was next and most recently attempted in this country by a woman in 1982. That performance by a young, virtually unknown New York actress, Diane Venora, provided the perfect contrast to Dame Judith's.

As one of the theatre's foremost actresses of tragic heroines, Judith Anderson for many years aspired to the world's most famous masculine role. Playing Gertrude in 1934 to John Gielgud's Hamlet on Broadway did not allow her to close the book on the play because, as she explains, "[The] majority of great parts are written for men; the minds of men are more exciting than the minds of women. [Men] have greater scope of power, imagination, kindness and brutality. All the emotions see[m] . . . keyed high for the male roles."[3] Thus when director William Ball and producer Paul Gregory sought to cast her in the most formidable of Shakespearean roles, a long cherished notion became for Dame Judith reality. She believed that neither her sex nor age would be a barrier to audiences: "I don't think of Hamlet as either male or female—the role is asexual."[4] Asked her age by a reporter covering the Carnegie Hall production, she replied, "Sure, I'm old, but I am sick and tired of you writers who keep dwelling on that. . . . What I do on the stage is what counts. . . . My age isn't important to . . . a lot of young people who have never seen me perform."[5]

Dame Judith's Hamlet was, in keeping with her own station, noble and grand. Her slender figure was striking in black tunic, tights, and boots. This inky costume accentuated her blonde hair, cropped to suggest the Danish look cultivated by Olivier in his film version of *Hamlet*. The rest of the cast were clothed exclusively in red velvet, with royalty and court wearing long flowing capes over plain red linen. The stage was adorned only with dark red velvet flats and a red carpeted ramp. Hamlet played most often with his right knee slightly bent and his hands at his sides or behind his back. His fixed gestures, the absence of any props or representational sets, and the stark nature of the costuming made the whole production, cut to under two hours, similar to a concert reading.

Thus all attention in this simple, abbreviated cutting was focused on the lines, most of which were Hamlet's. Dame Judith's rich, deep voice was clearly projected and immaculately phrased. She delivered the soliloquies and great speeches slowly, deliberately punctuating them with long dramatic pauses. In the "To be, or not to be" speech, which she played as soliloquy, for example, these pauses seemed like periods of hesitation on the actress' part; some audience members, in fact, took them to be memory lapses. One reviewer accused the Dame of "skip[ping] hurriedly to the [passages] she liked best" and then lingering over them. This same critic charged that in the gravedigging scene Dame Judith betrayed obvious boredom in the lines with the gravedigger, "not bantering with him, hardly even looking at him," merely biding time until she came to her own "Alas, poor Yorick!," which she sobbed pathetically.[6] On the contrary, I interpreted her rendering of the scene with the (one) gravedigger in a casual, off-hand manner as very deliberate, a manifestation of the actress' concept of Hamlet the satirical rogue as dry and nonchalant in his wit. He badgered the gravedigger by rapidly firing a series of questions at him. The skull, merely suggested by the gravedigger's cupped hands, then motivated the change to Hamlet the melancholic would-be revenger. The Dame's sobbing at this point marked one of the rare moments in the action that her Hamlet gave in to emotional stress.

Similarly, in the exchanges with Polonius early in the play Hamlet was matter-of-fact, quiet, even mundane. But this wry speech was the outgrowth of the nature of his wit, particularly as he feigned madness, not of the actress's boredom with the dialogue. He displayed the same debonair lack of concern with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, delivering "What piece of work is a man!" almost like a string of cliches. The only point at which Dame Judith represented Hamlet's feigned madness through frivolous, nonsensical behavior was in his dialogue with Ophelia before the play-within-the play. In this scene he changed starkly at "look you how cheerfully my mother looks," pointing across the stage to the king and queen and sarcastically shouting, "and my father died within's two hours." Even after his exuberant reaction to the response evoked in Claudius by "The Mousetrap," Hamlet slipped back into nonchalance before becoming noticeably irritated upon Polonius' next entrance. In none of these instances should the Dame's calculated dryness have been interpreted as indifference or apathy. Her wry rather than sardonic rendering of this facet of Hamlet's character was perhaps the most distinctive feature of her enactment of the role. This casual quality which dominated Hamlet's exchanges in the internal acts of the play finally modulated to resignation near the end as Hamlet and Horatio contemplated the duel. Dame Judith's Hamlet in this scene was at first calm, then contemplative, then slightly anxious though still quiet, and finally resigned.

From Dame Judith's regal, eloquent Hamlet there were few emotional displays. The first real show of intense feeling came just before (the one) intermission in "O, what a rogue and peasant slave." With peaks of high and low intensity, Dame Judith built up to F1's "O, vengeance," following the line with quiet, firm resolution, after which she climaxed the whole speech with an exuberant "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the *conscience* of the King." In the "Get thee to a nunnery" scene, Hamlet spoke pleadingly to Ophelia, conveying real love; but a stark change of tone, motivated by his seeing Polonius and Claudius behind the arras, marked his angriest moment in the play.

The only other point at which this Hamlet failed to restrain his rage was also related by Dame Judith to his love for Ophelia. Grappling with Laertes following her funeral, he became angry, then cried before finally calming himself and pathetically proclaiming, "I loved you ever," to the dead Ophelia. Even in the closet scene Hamlet was relatively restrained, not roughhandling his mother but clasping her hands or touching her face and then finally pushing her over. Whereas Gertrude sobbed loudly during most of the scene, Dame Judith cried only at the "Mother, for love of grace" line. Hamlet's rare sobs and angry outbursts were contrasted on the one hand by Gertrude's frequent cries, motivated by her maternal feelings for Ophelia and Laertes as well as for her own son, and on the other hand by Claudius' habitual loud rage. The Dame's quietly self-analytical, grand Hamlet seemed indeed one who "was likely, had he been put on, / To have prov'd most royal."

It is impossible to imagine a female Hamlet who stands in starker contrast to Dame Judith Anderson's than that of her recent American successor, Diane Venora. The thirty-year-old Hartford native had never seen a stage production of *Hamlet* when in 1982 Joseph Papp asked her to read the role. Having already directed four productions of the tragedy, Papp wanted to mount the play again simply to give a new actor an opportunity for the role. His aim was to find an adolescent-type player who had the capacity to alter rapidly his emotional state, even within a thought. Both these criteria met in Venora, who describes herself as "an androgynous female"[7] and whose capacity for nimble thinking is evident in almost every line she delivers.

Despite Papp's stated aim to produce a noble, classical Hamlet, one who is vulnerable but not hysterical, he nonetheless built his interpretation around the concept of the prince as youth or adolescent. Such an interpretation, argued on textual and psychological grounds by a number of critics and actors of the role, gives one an advantage in dealing with certain problems inherent (according to them) in depicting Hamlet: his extreme idealization of his dead father, deep affection for and dependency on his mother, and inexperience with and apparent distrust of women.[8] In both voice and body Venora facilitated this concept of an extremely youthful protagonist. Her contralto voice is clear and versatile; her diction, precise and penetrating. She is athletic, capable of appearing boyish with her slight build (5'6", 112 pounds) and lithe, dark appearance. She has the physical ability to enact a masculine role convincingly without caricaturing masculinity.

Papp chose an elegant early nineteenth-century setting for the production on the basis that a more modern style of pants disguises an actress in a male role better than Renaissance garb. Miss Venora wore a long, dark, close-fitting military jacket with a high collar and ornate gold trim, a wide sash at the waist, and boots, her hair in a boyish cut. The rich, elegant costumes were appropriate for the grand acting area at the Anspacher Theater at Papp's Greenwich Village complex, The Public. The major features of the chamber, which serves as both stage and audience seating area, are its marble-like columns and three-story atrium. For *Hamlet* the audience sat in tiers on opposite sides of the playing area. The whole theatrical environment, brightly lit except during Hamlet's soliloquies, suggested courtly elegance. One reviewer described the setting as Napoleonic; another, as Bismarckian.[9] A bright Anspacher does not, however, suggest the milieu of Claudius' Denmark. Frank Rich, reviewing the production in *The New York Times*, complained, "When the ghost appears, we don't feel we're in Elsinore at darkest night but in the lobby of a Miami Beach hotel at cocktail hour."[10] Certainly the realism and glitter contrasted to William Ball's simple two-color, non-representational set for Dame Judith's Hamlet.

In keeping with the notion of an adolescent, masculine Hamlet, Diane Venora's prince was a very physical one. With regard to her frequent leaps and bounds, Walter Kerr wrote, "[W]e feel that Hamlet must have been closely related to Peter Pan."[11] In addition, Miss Venora behaved very violently with both Ophelia and Gertrude, in reaction to which T.E. Kalem remarked in his review that she was "the most masculine Hamlet to appear in years. For much of the evening she strut[ted] about like a fascist bullyboy."[12] In the closet scene Hamlet stabbed Polonius repeatedly, in Kalem's words, "in an orgiastic frenzy."[13] Then the prince and his mother wrestled on the floor, an approach that Edith Oliver, writing in *The New Yorker*, found "much kinkier" than the Oedipus complex.[14] After Hamlet had in this manner roughed up his mother, his line "How is it with you, lady?" effected audience laughter. In the "Get thee to a nunnery" scene, Venora threw in Ophelia's face one by one the remembrances she returned to him, ripped up her prayer book, and then pelted her with it. But perhaps the least dignified of all stage business by this Hamlet occurred in the duel with Laertes when the prince kicked his opponent in the rear! All of these actions, deliberately unheroic in a protagonist whom Papp had billed as noble, seemed aimed at eliminating any trace of femininity in a woman playing a man's role.

Something seemed to go awry with Papp's emphasis on Hamlet's extreme youth as well, for rather than merely immature, Venora seemed childish in, for example, peevishly taunting Polonius and sticking out her tongue at Claudius' guards. Thus her Hamlet impressed critic Kerr as a fourteen-year-old home from prep school rather than Wittenburg University.[15] To capitalize on Venora's youthfulness and short stature, Papp cast a much older actor as Horatio and made him mentor to the prince. The two were physical opposites, Horatio tall, bearded, balding, and bespectacled—in Rich words, one who seemed "to have wandered in from Uncle Vanya."[16] Venora's youthful Hamlet was also deliberately very emotional, weeping as often as he raged. Said the actress, "My Hamlet is . . . raw. He gives in to his passion, rage, disillusionment, fear."[17] Yet for audiences the line between youthful vulnerability and femininity is thin, and in the estimate of some reviewers, Venora was "girlish"—weeping too often and throwing too many tantrums.[18]

In spite of Diane Venora's histrionics, stage tricks, and failure to sustain a well-defined, unified concept of character, there were many memorable moments in her portrayal. Hamlet's sense of humor, for example, reflected the prince's intelligence and cynical wit. More than one critic praised Venora's deft taunting of Claudius after the murder of Polonius.[19] Nor was there anything eccentric or bizarre about her feigned madness. Furthermore, there were many nice pieces of stage business along the way, for example, Hamlet's singing "God Save the Queen" as he was packed off to England. More importantly, Miss Venora's interpretation of the lines in a virtually uncut, four-hour version of *Hamlet* reflected, for the most part, a good grasp of meaning. Few of her new readings resulted in displaced emphasis. Some passages, for example, "What piece of work is a man" and "There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow," fairly soared. On the whole, Miss Venora, however excessive and unheroic, was never hysterical or weak. Her unrefined Hamlet was at the same time more realistic and more human than Dame Judith's as well as visually and vocally superior.

What is the rationale for casting a female as Hamlet? Some directors have done so in an effort to emphasize the character's "feminine" qualities—precision, refinement, sensitivity, emotional expressiveness, even procrastination (euphemistically called "hesitancy" by critic Arthur Ganz[20]). The perception of what is "feminine," of course, is relative to prevailing sexual stereotypes. Women, for example, were once regarded as imprecise thinkers but are now considered by some overly precise. Furthermore, the degree to which feminine traits are acceptable in a male character varies in each age and culture. Booth attributed his success as Hamlet to the fact that he "endeavored to make prominent the femininity" of the prince. He further stated, "I doubt if ever a robust and masculine treatment of the character will be accepted so generally as the more womanly and refined interpretation."[21] Sarah Bernhardt, going beyond the view that Hamlet is feminine or even asexual, remarked concerning his sexual identity, "I cannot see Hamlet as a man. The things he says, his impulses, his actions, entirely indicate to me that he was a woman."[22]

Yet for audiences today, particularly American audiences, even a delicate Hamlet is unacceptable, let alone a feminine one. Thus the modern director of a female Hamlet may put an inordinate amount of effort into making the actress believable as a man and not enough into the overall production. For both Anderson's and Venora's Hamlets, reviewers complained that supporting actors were mediocre, working in seeming isolation from the star, and that the production seemed to lack a unifying concept. Finally, perhaps the greatest irony in the whole business of the relationship of sex to roles in the theater is that when a woman plays a man onstage, she is likely to avoid the display of any so-called feminine traits. To be "girlish" is to fail at playing the man.

Whether or not all modern female Hamlets are doomed to go down as failed experiments, the very experience of seeing the play on new terms can lead to new insights for the serious student of Shakespeare. Viewing such a production, the spectator takes nothing for granted but examines every part anew; hears lines that have been never heard before. And having gotten past one's natural reluctance to accept a woman in the role of Hamlet, the viewer can get down to the serious business of assessing the actor's conception and execution of the part.

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NOTES

1. Frank W. Wadsworth, "Hamlet and Iago: Nineteenth-Century Breeches Parts," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 17 (1966), 130.
2. Quoted by Wadsworth, 132.
3. *Dame Judith Anderson as Hamlet* Souvenir Program (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Kal Efron, 1970), n. pag.
4. Quoted in Souvenir Program.
5. Quoted by Lewis Funke, "Dame Hamlet," *The New York Times*, 3 January 1971. Dame Judith does not hold the record among superannuated Hamlets, however. Betterton played the role at seventy-five.
6. Mel Gussow, "Stage: A Lady 'Hamlet,'" *The New York Times*, 15 January 1971.
7. *Rehearsing* Hamlet*: The Work Process of the Public Theater Production*, Joseph Papp, 1982.
8. See, for example, Walter Kerr, "This Boyish Princeling Is an Unpersuasive Hamlet," *The New York Times*, 12 December 1971.
9. Kerr: Arthur Ganz, "Shakespeare in New York," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 34, 1 (Spring 1983), 107.
10. "Theater: Diane Venora Stars in Papp's 'Hamlet,'"3 December 1982.
11. "This Boyish Princeling."
12. "Ignoble Dane," *Time*, 13 December 1982.

13. "Ignoble Dane."

14. "The Theatre: Off Broadway," 13 December 1982.

15. "This Boyish Princeling."

16. "Theater: Diane Venora."

17. *Rehearsing* Hamlet.

18. See, for example, Oliver (n. 14 above)

19. See, for example, Oliver (Ibid.)

20. "Shakespeare in New York" (n.9 above)

21. Quoted by Leslie Bennetts, "Why not a Woman as Hamlet?" *The New York Times*, 20 November 1982.

22. Quoted by Bennetts (Ibid.)

CRITICAL FORUM

("No, no, they do but jest—poison in jest.
No offence i'th' world")

"Taboo or Not Taboo": Some Demurrers

As Dr. Eric Sams knows, I took exception to his suggestion that Shakespeare authored the *Ur-Hamlet* in my lengthy response to him in the *TLS*.[1] In his follow-up article recently in *Hamlet Studies*,[2] he has raised several points which can be challenged. To begin, I take my vantage point from his interesting observation that "the universally adopted term *Ur-Hamlet* is formed by analogy with an early version of *Faust* known as the *Ur-Faust*" (p. 21); because of my own recent study on the relation between these two masterpieces of their authors,[3] naturally this further association is worth a moment's pause. But I am not sure it invites more than that, because although Dr. Sams is surely correct that Germanists accept the *Ur-Faust* as also by Goethe, his further comment, "as common sense also insists," is a bit misleading. Because Lessing also wrote on the Faust theme and did so before Goethe, common sense hardly forces the conclusion that an *Ur-Faust* had to be Goethean.

Analogously, Dr. Sams correlates Katherine Hamlet with Shakespeare's play by finding her "presumably a kinswoman" (p. 20). Kin to whom, Shakespeare's son Hamnet or to Hamlet Sadler? Because someone outside the playwright's family had the Hamlet name, it would seem perfectly plausible that Katherine's surname had no connection to either family. Granted, her demise in the river Avon correlates neatly with Ophelia's death, but to push this matter further is pure speculation.

It is likewise extremely speculative to venture the hypothesis that the Stratford upstart composed the *Ur-Hamlet* when the only name definitely associated with a possible author in Nashe's preface to *Menaphon* is Thomas Kyd. We know that the reference to "the Kidde in Aesop" must be a play upon words because the latter's fables have no reference to a literal kid. Nashe's pun on "Kidde" would appear to support, rather than detract from, the previous quibble he has on *"Hamlets"* and "handfulls." Hence the playwright in question would still appear to be the dramatist mentioned. In the same passage, all of the "translators" mentioned, presumably including the author of the *Hamlet* mentioned (namely the *Ur-Hamlet)*, are described as having "runne through euery arte." But Shakespeare was too young to have been able to do this. If *Menaphon* was published already two years earlier, presumably again with Nashe's preface, then Shakespeare was still a minor or had just reached the age of adulthood.

As for Dr. Sams's point that Shakespeare is cited by Harvey in 1598 in connection with the Danish tragedy, I have no ready answer but think that due consideration should be taken of the Earl of Essex's being more in the limelight after the turn of the century. Also because Fairfax's edition of Tasso appeared in 1600, the early date that Harvey "wrote in" may well have been after the fact.

Name-play is a great temptation, and Dr. Sams's view that the name of Hamlet was "an anagram of the French equivalent for the Latin form of the non-Christian name of a legendary pagan prince of Denmark" (p. 20) is curious. True, strictly speaking the word *Hamlet* happens to be a slight rearrangement of the letters in *Amleth*, but, to my mind, this phenomenon might better be explained linguistically as metathesis. To suggest some kind of deliberate codification is to be a bit too arcane for Shakespeare. Let me give an analogy. Recently I have supported the view that the so-called "Dedication" to Shakespeare's Sonnets contains name-play on "W. Hall."[4] In responding to me, Donald Foster claimed that my contention was based on a cryptogrammatic reading, one that by its very arcane nature would hardly be taken seriously.[5] Yet asserting that the phrase "W. H. all happinesse" in the "Dedication" is name-play on "W. Hall all happinesse" involves no essential rearrangement of letters and so hardly amounts to supporting an anagram or secretive reading. Perhaps if the manager of the printing house, Thomas Thorpe, had not been such a deliberate punster elsewhere, had not punned this way in another dedicatory address on the words *Blount* and *blunt* (as I pointed out),[6] such inherent name-play on "all" and "Hall" would not be seen as so much in keeping with his usual flair. Likewise, I should think that too much can be made of the curious fact that in the name *Hamlet* the first letter has been switched from the end of the name *Amleth*. More probably *Hamlet* represented an aspirated form of the French name and thus was not so uncommon with a number of English people at the time. It is too easy simply to romanticize this name and play.[7]

Dr. Sams writes of the "unusual and indeed otherwise unheard of description 'The Tragical History of *Hamlet*'" (p. 22), but, in keeping with his relating the Danish tragedy to the German one, might it not be added that

Dr. Faustus was also called a tragical history titularly? Granted, the Marlovian work was published only after Shakespeare's, and we cannot be certain of its full stage title earlier, but it is at least a reasonable assumption that the title used when the play appeared in print represented what the author had originally in mind. Yet Sams has provided a breath of fresh air in more ways than one.

ROBERT F. FLEISSNER

NOTES

1. Letter to the Editor of the *TLS*, 3 Sept. 1982, p. 947.
2. "Taboo, or Not Taboo? The Text, Dating and Authorship of *Hamlet*, 1589-1623," *Hamlet Studies*, 10 (1988), 12-46.
3. *The Prince and the Professor: The Wittenberg Connection in Marlowe, Shakespeare, Goethe and Frost—A Hamlet-Faust(us) Analogy*. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitatsverlag, 1986: Evanston, Illinois: Adler's Foreign Books, 1987).
4. Letter to the Editor of *PMLA*, 102 (1987), 839-40.
5. *Ibid.*, 840.
6. *Ibid.*, 839. This name-play immediately preceded the *Sonnets*.
7. To be fair, I have also indulged in considering possible name-play at the end of the "*Threnos*" section of "The Phoenix and the Turtle," whereby Shakespeare's name (just beneath) relates to the last three prayerful words ("sigh a prayer") almost as a variant form. See my "Shakespeare's Epitaph and the *Threnos*," *Notes and Queries*, NS 35 (1988), 53-54. But we have some basis for such playfulness in the fact that other contributors to *Love's Martyr* delighted in acrostics and the like. To make something esoteric out of the name *Hamlet* is to go a bit far, recalling the erratic behavior of anti-Stratfordians. (On the other hand, it is hard to be apodeictic, because it is generally recognized that *Caliban* is an anagram for the variant form *canibal*, that *Moth* in *Love's Labour's Lost* may reflect *Thomas* Nashe, and that even the ending of Othello's name may reflect the letters in the surname of John Leo, to whose work on Africa Shakespeare may well have been indebted—*ello* being an improper suffix for Italian proper nouns or names. These are at best "partial anagrams" and exceptional, quite possibly unconscious.)

REVIEWS

A Review of Periodical Articles (1989-90)

The status of the written text preoccupies different kinds of critics for different kinds of reasons. From a deconstructive point of view, writing and the process of writing are inescapably bound up with the broadest ideological commitments. By privileging—as some such critics would say—the individual, the whole movement of western thought (for such criticism is never afraid of the big statement) termed by Jacques Derrida 'logocentrism' has idealized the hand that writes into a metaphysical statement of implicit identity and power. Jonathan Goldberg[1] presents a strongly, sometimes powerfully, written analysis of the relevance to *Hamlet* of Derrida's generalization of "the labor of the hand as the site of a cultural graphology invested in graphic substances and instruments." Against the idealizing mode of traditional western thought, Derrida sets "the ideological force of the scriptive order."

Hamlet's hand is his character, his princely mark. Goldberg notes how monarchy was taught the importance of handwriting, whether Elizabeth I's fine italic hand, praised by her teacher, Roger Ascham, as the finest of all her attributes, or Prince Henry's under the tutelage of Peter Bales and John Davies. Martin Billingsley, who taught the future Charles I, was author of *The Pens Excellencie or The Secretaries Delight* (1618), where he rhetorically asked, of the art of writing, "Is it not one of the hands by which not only this, but al other common-wealths are upholden?" Here, observes Goldberg, is the very text of idealization of the material into symbols of power. Writen language, and the power to create it, thus become authority's mark, and, conversely, the sign of subordination. The documents which come down to historians (loyalty oaths, court affidavits, marriage licences and so on) are the signs of a people subscribing to laws, signalling in their hand that acceptance.

"Know you the hand?" asks Laertes of Claudius. "'Tis Hamlet's character," replies Claudius, looking on Hamlet's letter to him. Such an equation of hand and character is thus located in the material, a "being-in-the-hand stripped of its metaphysical dimension." The whole world Hamlet enters is a scriptive one—from the Ghost's command to remember him (or even from Hamlet's first appearance in an inky cloak?) to the actual letters he sends. Nor is Hamlet alone in this. Laertes is "charactered within a pedagogical and ideological apparatus" by Polonius's, instructions, the materiality of power setting him in the language of the copy-book. His father's directions thus clothe him in a language of the inauthentic.

John Brinsle's *Ludus Literarius* (1612), a treatise dedicated to the Princes Henry and Charles, is cited as an instance of how the civil order is inscribed. Such manuals and primers possess ideological power, as is evident when, for example, Brinsley expresses his hope that students entering grammar school will already be able "to reade English: as namely that they could reade the new Testament perfectly." The connection between written learning and ruling ideology is thus made all too apparent. The human character formed by such constructs becomes a "locus of inscription." So all characters are literary characters. How, then, does Hamlet authenticate his character as character? Our printed texts here vary in open-ended division. Hamlet's letter to Horatio has its last line, *"So that thou knowest thine Hamlet,"* italicized in Q2; whereas F prints the entire letter in italics, save for the names, which are given in the same type as the rest of the play. Does the Folio text suggest that the letter is not part of the play, having an extra-dramatic identity? Italics connote class and power; so that Hamlet's non-italic signature "marks *différance*."

And where does this leave us? We are left with plenty of knowledge of Elizabethan and Jacobean writing practices, set in the form of a text (for such, of course, is Goldberg's article) which instates its own materiality. It does so by means of the literal hands and examples of handwriting which are splendidly illustrated among its leaves, and by its own form, which, in its conclusion, reflects textually Hamlet's words to Osric in 5.2 that "To make true diction of him, his semblance is his mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more." Nothing more. Ipse dixit.

Whereas shorter notes in this batch provide respectively a specifically national example of the cultural materiality of text and dramatic performance, an instance of the literal text's immaterial, because metaphorical, potential, and a type of the text's uncertainty. George Hyde[2] writes that earlier Polish versions of *Hamlet* (e.g. Boguslawski's, staged in 1797) tended to sentimentalize and simplify the play. Recent acting versions and editions, however, have located it firmly within the centre of Polish politics. Productions otherwise different, such as the 1956 Krakow performance and Andrzej Wajda's 1960 Gdansk version, have emphasized power-struggles and power-structures within the play. Witold Chwalewik's 1963 translation and edition is particularly interesting because of its noting of the Polish dimension of the text. Cited examples are the name of Polonius, and the possibility that *The Mousetrap* derives from a Polish tale by Kromer about a villainous king eaten by mice or rats, of which three editions appeared in England between 1560 and 1570. Hyde sees his concern as a reflection of the "morbid self-consciousness" of a country threatened by invasion and governed by authoritarian regimes. If so, how will productions of our play respond to the kaleidoscope of events in eastern Europe still restlessly shifting as this review is being penned?

While recent editors (Jenkins, Edwards, Hibbard) usefully and properly gloss Hamlet's couplet about the time being out of joint in relation to contemporary phrases and usage, the underlying metaphorical nature of the lines has not been openly stated. Hamlet, argues Thomas Clayton,[3] is combining the language of surgery and time-keeping, with the word "set" being the link: 'set' as in setting a leg, 'set it right' as in setting a clock. Shakespeare thus brings together the idea of the body politic being in need of repair and that of the *tempora/mores*. This is neat and valid enough, as, in more ingenious vein, is Anthony Brian Taylor's[4] suggestion that the phrase "peasant slave" (2.2) has led editors into fruitless searches for parallels because it is actually the result of a misprint in its source, John Studley's translation of *Hercules Oetaeus*. The hero berates Philoctetes for not acting decisively, and calls him a "coward, peasant slave." But this translates three Latin adjectives, "Ignave, iners, inermis." Since Studley treats "Ignave" and "inermis" as nouns ("coward," "slave"), consistency would suggest that he intended "iners," too, to be translated as a noun. The word means 'without science or craft.' Hence the misprint lies in the omission of a comma. Or just a slip of the hand?

W. HUTCHINGS

NOTES

1. Jonathan Goldberg, "Hamlet's Hand," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39, no. 3 (Fall, 1988), 307-27.
2. George Hyde, "Hamlet the Pole," *New Comparison*, 5 (Summer, 1988), 111-22.
3. Thomas Clayton, "*Hamlet* I.v. 196-197: 'The Time is out of Joint'," *Notes and Queries*, 35 no. 4 (December 1988), 471-3.
4. Anthony Brian Taylor, "Shakespeare, Studley, and Golding," *Review of English Studies*, 39, no. 156 (November, 1988), 522-27.

"Fanned and Winnowed Opinions": Shakespearean Essays Presented to Harold Jenkins. Edited by John W. Mahon and Thomas A. Pendleton. London and New York: Methuen, 1987. pp.ix+299.

"Fanned and Winnowed opinions" is Harold Jenkin's reading (following Warburton) of *Hamlet* 5.2.189 and may be taken as a typical example of his editorial judgement, but the phrase provides an apt description of his own writing as well, which is everywhere marked, in the words of the editors, by "grace, precision, and magisterial judgement" (p. 4). One cannot however say that the phrase is equally applicable to the essays collected in this volume, though the influence of Professor Jenkins can perhaps be seen in the fact that they are all refreshingly free from current critical jargon, and it is wonderful not to have Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva et al. mentioned even once.

Appropriately enough in a *Festschrift* for the editor of the Arden *Hamlet*, three of the sixteen essays are on this play. In a brief note, "'The Play's the thing': Hamlet and the conscience of the Queen," Richard Proudfoot mentions some well-known sources of the passage where Hamlet speaks of "guilty creatures sitting at a play" (2.2.585). One of these sources (noted by Jenkins) is the story of a woman at Lynn in Norfolk who was so moved while watching the performance of a tragedy (in which a woman is haunted by the ghost of her husband whom she had murdered) that she cried out that she too had committed a similar crime. According to Proudfoot recent documentary evidence suggests that such an incident had actually occurred. The fact that there is a woman at the centre of this widely-known story must have given to the informed spectator of the time an "oblique" or "subliminal" hint at Hamlet's suspicion of his mother and suggested that the mousetrap was intended to catch the conscience of the queen as well as the king. The argument would seem to imply that Hamlet shares only a part of his plan with Horatio (3.2.75-87), keeping to himself his suspicion of his mother and his intention to concentrate on observing her during the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*, though this is a point which goes against Hamlet's explicit statements to Horatio both before and after that play.

In "With a little shuffling," George Walton Williams, seeking to pluck out the heart of Claudius's mystery as well as Polonius's, finds it in the word "shuffling," which occurs as many as three times in this play out of a total of eight occurrences in the entire canon. Williams argues that the term, which suggests furtiveness or deviousness, describes the technique used by Claudius to secure his election to the throne, it being a significant fact in this connection that two of the three uses of the term in this play occur in his speeches (in the "prayer scene," 3.3.57-64, and in the scene with Laertes, (4.4.135-8). In particular, Williams argues, it must have been with shuffling that he won over Polonius to his scheme of usurpation and made of him a willing accomplice. Two arguments are offered in support of this latter point: first, that Polonius's own behaviour suggests that he is used to deviousness, as in his recommendation of "indirections" to Reynaldo; and second, that the following lines are really a confession of his own guilty past:

> We are oft to blame in this,
> 'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's visage
> And pious action we do sugar o'er
> The devil himself.
>
> (3.1.46)

In support of the first point Williams writes: "The system by which Polonius uses the instrument of Rinaldo to achieve his purpose with Laertes may well be thought to reproduce the system by which Claudius used the instrument of Polonius to achieve his purpose in attaining the crown" (p. 158). This is both imprecise and unconvincing. The real parallelism surely is with Claudius's use of Polonius or of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find out the truth about Hamlet. Besides, "manipulating," which accurately describes Claudius's use of Laertes, for example, is hardly the right word for Polonius's use of Reynaldo. (Incidentally, it is curious that Williams should prefer the spelling "Rinaldo," even though we have been told by the editors that the Arden edition has been used in all the essays.) Williams's second argument would have been more convincing if Polonius's speech had been a soliloquy. Moreover, Claudius's response to it in an aside which makes it quite clear that he sees its relevance to his own behaviour, makes no mention of Polonius. Williams's essay is however a useful one in that it demonstrates the numerous links of imagery and action that connect Polonius as an instrument of Claudius's policy with Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and even Osric, and so serves to highlight the fact that the longest of Shakespeare's plays is also one of the most closely knit.

This is brought out in greater detail in the most substantial essay on the play in this collection, Alastair Fowler's study of the numerological structure of the play in "The plays within the play of *Hamlet*," which he modestly describes as a supplement to Keith Brown's analysis published in *Shakespeare Survey*, 26 (1973), though the latter applies to *Hamlet* the approach sketched by Fowler himself in *Triumphal Forms* (1970). Brown demonstrated a symmetry between the scenes of the first two acts and those of the last two, with a "mannerist double centre" in Act 3: the "strategic centre" in the play scene (3.2) and the "numerological centre" in the closet scene (3.4). Fowler adds to the examples of symmetry given by Brown, giving a fascinating numerological analysis of *The Murder of Gonzago* in the process, and explores their thematic significance. Fowler shows that like several other plays of Shakespeare's, *Hamlet* has a two-part structure with a break after 3.3 (and not after 4.4 as argued by Emrys Jones) and with numerous correspondences linking the two parts. To give just one example, the "mousetrap" in the first part corresponds to the fencing match in the second: both are inserted entertainments or plays within plays which precipitate the denouement in their respective parts (p.176). The analysis of the *The Murder of Gonzago* impressively demonstrates the mathematical precision of its organization, with the numbers of lines in the different speeches related to each other by a common ratio, and with the thematically central thirty-line speech by the Player King occupying a mathematically central position within it as well as within the larger frame of the entire play. The analysis makes it impossible to deny that there is deliberate artifice behind the mathematical symmetries, but one may still question their aesthetic significance. Fowler argues that these symmetries are not mere scaffolding, as Brown concedes, "but patterns made for the pleasure and instruction of audiences and readers" (p. 167).

As far as instruction is concerned, such symmetries have a strictly subordinate, even marginal, role, for the highlighting of themes, which is what Fowler has in mind, is done mainly through qualitative rather than quantitative means. The entire numerological structure of *The Murder of Gonzago* would collapse if the central speech has thirty-one or twenty-nine lines instead of thirty, but that would not in the least alter the thematic significance or the affective power of the speech. (One cannot of course rule out the possibility that given sufficient ingenuity something may be made even out of such unpromising numbers as 29 and 31!) Fowler's linking of numerological structures to oral literature is also doubtful, for whether it be the case of Dante or Spenser or Shakespeare, such structures seem to have more to do with written rather than spoken words. No audience, not even one "habituated" . . . to following complex oral literature and to participating in intricate ceremonies of many kinds," (p. 166) could ever perceive such symmetries in any but the shortest poems. The proper analogues for such construction is not to be found in the temporal arts of music or oral poetry but in the spatial arts, such as the mannerist painting mentioned by both Brown and Fowler, or the intricate symmetries of Elizabethan decorative and emblematic designs.

But even here it is useful to rehearse the distinction that whereas symmetries in a picture, however intricate, are sensuously perceived and give sensuous pleasure, the pleasures of numerological structures in literature are purely intellectual and available only to those who undertake an analysis of the kind given in this essay as a sort of bonus for their extra effort. Numerological construction is in fact little more than an amusing and elegant game that a writer plays by himself or with his *readers*, though it must be admitted that often there is also a residuum of the primitive belief in magical or sacred numbers.

Of the other essays in this volume, special mention may be made of Ruth Nevo's attempt to put *All's Well that Ends Well* into the "canon of Shakespeare's most admired plays" (p. 50). Though the play seems unable "to make up its generic mind," Nevo argues that one does not need a special category like the problem play to elucidate it, for it can be seen as a successor to the "festive" or "maturational" comedies and as anticipating the romances. *All's Well,* she observes, "places itself at a node where three dreams cross: the dream of the elders reliving their lives through their children, the dream of the young man escaping parental domination, and the dream of the young woman desiring a child and a father" (p. 29). It is this "intermesh" of the memories and desires of the young and the old which distinguishes this play from the comedies and the romances. Nevo also makes an interesting defence of Bertram, that least popular of Shakespeare's comic heroes. There are several other useful and interesting essays in the volume, but it is difficult to single out any as outstanding. One must add in conclusion that the freedom from current jargon, mentioned at the beginning of this review, goes with a rather narrow academic focus that prevents the book as a whole from being truly exciting in spite of the many useful things in it.

RAJIVA VERMA

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